



REMINISCENCES OF THE ENGLISH LAKE POETS

By Thomas De Quincey

Introduction by PROFESSOR JOHN E.
JORDAN

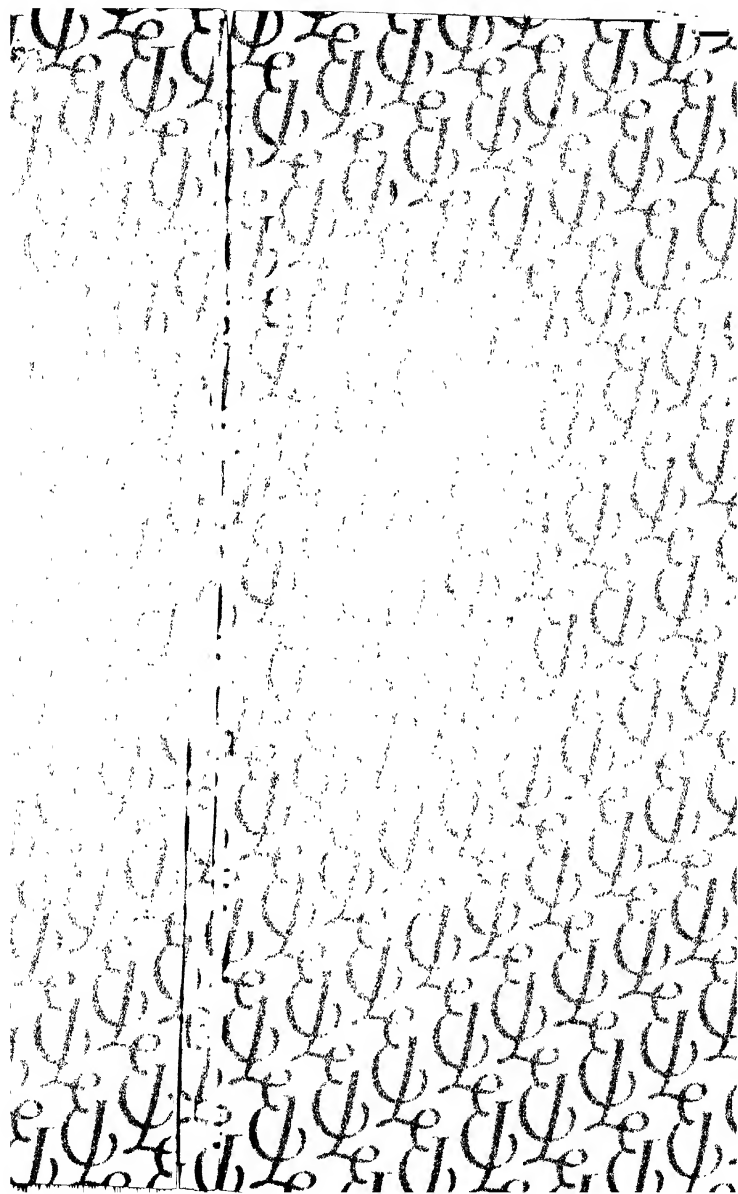
The quality which can ensure immortality in literature—apart from the high-water-mark of originality (the art of being oneself)—is the ability to rise above contemporary events and create work that men will always find strong, compelling and fundamental. If De Quincey cannot fulfil the highest obligations of the writer in this respect he was always and completely himself, and in whatever subject he undertook he always exercised a critical faculty upon it that was peculiarly his own. In the case of the present volume the subjects—Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth—were familiar to him and much of their private life is revealed in these reminiscences.

The rhetorical style is the one in which De Quincey is pre-eminent, and in this respect his gift for exposition and concentration of argument, great as these are with him, are second only to the flashing, dazzling quality of his prose, which contains many unsurpassed passages of the greatest brilliance. He is an extremely complicated writer to edit, and Everyman's Library is fortunate in

[Continued on back flap]

Wrapper drawing by Edward Bawden

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BIOGRAPHY

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side

THOMAS DE QUINCEY, born in Manchester in 1785, the son of a merchant. Ran away from Manchester Grammar School and went to London in 1802. Settled at Grasmere, 1809. Died at Edinburgh in 1859.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY
REMINISCENCES OF
THE ENGLISH LAKE POETS

INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES BY

JOHN E. JORDAN, PH.D.

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INTRODUCTION

THOMAS DE QUINCEY wrote his best when he was reminiscing. The most memorable parts of his *Confessions* and his *Autobiographical Sketches*, as well as the swirling fantasies of the *Suspiria de Profundis*, ripened in his memory and flowed from his inner life. If it were possible to find much tranquillity in a career which was so full of catastrophe—his perennial illness, his reiterated financial distress, the deaths of his wife and three of his sons—one might say that he profited from Wordsworth's 'recollected in tranquillity' formula. One of his most fruitful fields of recollection was that of his experiences in the Lake Country and his often intimate knowledge of its inhabitants. Here were materials aplenty that had had long gestation in his mind, so that he could write of them—not easily, for he never had any literary fluency—but with naturalness and relative simplicity, vividness and genuine authority.

Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets carry the authority of penetrating and perceptive observations, frankly and strikingly put, not of completeness or factual accuracy. De Quincey often admits that he has no knowledge of certain facets of the lives of his interesting neighbours, and he is not to be relied upon for details. But one does not read him for those things. One reads him for the poetic 'wholeness' of his feeling for the Lakes, which he sees, not as a tourist or hunter of the picturesque, but as an adopted son, with indigenous objectivity. One reads him even more for the peculiar vibrating intimacy of his portraits and the strong sense of human relations which permeates them. De Quincey wrote not as a biographical historian, but as a psychologist who could not quite keep himself off his couch. Or to put it as harshly as his contemporaries did, he wrote gossip and scandal, out of pique and prejudice. Southey—somewhat ungraciously, considering the complimentary account given of his character—told Carlyle that De Quincey deserved a thrashing, and Wordsworth complained to Barron Field: 'The Man has written under the influence of wounded feelings as he avows, I am told; for I

have never read a word of his infamous production nor ever shall.' Even De Quincey's mother reproached him for writing 'in a disreputable Magazine, on subjects and in a spirit afflicting, as I hear too, to your real friends'. Later and more objective readers may admit that it was ungenerous and even not nice of De Quincey to be so frank in revealing the foibles of his ex-intimates, and still rejoice in his indiscretions. To a Victorian critic like John Morley, De Quincey's was the worst picture of Wordsworth; but to one of Wordsworth's latest biographers, F. W. Bateson, De Quincey's portrait is the best. And a twentieth-century biographer of Coleridge borrowed from De Quincey the title of his life, 'The Sublime Somnambulist'.

It is possible to sympathize with the Wordsworths for being irritated at published references to Mary's 'obliquity of vision', William's mean appearance and Dorothy's lack of sex appeal, and at the same time to understand and sympathize with De Quincey's motives in so describing them. He wrote partly as a journalist, with a journalist's instinct to amuse his reader and a journalist's need to turn out copy that would sell. Those years, 1834-40, were hard: his eldest son, William, died in 1833 and his wife in 1837, leaving him with six children. Write as much as he could for *Blackwood's* and *Tait's* there was not always enough food, and he had to go into sanctuary in Edinburgh's Holyrood to keep from being arrested for debts. Under such circumstances, when he was being paid by the sheet, it must have seemed enough that—as his editor William Tait bears witness—he often suppressed passages which he thought calculated to give offence.

Indeed, suppression was even forbearing, since he was undoubtedly writing from 'wounded feelings' and got some satisfaction in scratching away at the feet of clay he had found on his idols. For such to him Coleridge and Wordsworth had been. He had moved into Dove Cottage as an acolyte into a shrine and served the Wordsworth family faithfully: he was playmate to the children; he laboured with an unappreciated fastidiousness to see Wordsworth's *Convention of Cintra* through the London press; he even sent up a patented smoke preventer to be installed in the refractory Allan Bank chimneys. Yet when in 1817 he married Margaret Simpson, a 'Statesman's'* daughter, several months after their first child was born, the Wordsworths failed to give him the

* See page 37.

support he needed. It signifies nothing that the Wordsworths, already leery of his increasing dependence upon alcohol and opium, understandably considered that he had gone beyond the pale; he as understandably thought himself shabbily treated. De Quincey was never on quite such intimate terms with Coleridge as with the Wordsworths, but he escorted Coleridge's family, lent him books, promoted *The Friend*, and gave him £300 he could ill afford. And Coleridge, so he heard, was accusing him of leading others to the use of opium. De Quincey was hurt, and a little bitter. He did not permit his personal disappointment in these men to distort his appreciation of their genius, but he did feel that they had freed him from restraints which friendship might put upon honest biography, so that twenty-odd years after his intimacy with them had ended he could write of them frankly.

De Quincey's frankness is not just disgruntled blabbing: it owes something to his conviction that a biographer should be forthright and interesting. As early as 17th October 1818 he had written in the *Westmorland Gazette*: 'Biography, to be useful, is often a painful duty.' And as late as 1850 he told his publisher, James Hogg, that 'nothing makes such dreary and monotonous reading as the old hackneyed roll-call, chronologically arrayed, of inevitable facts in a man's life'. He took care to turn out no such monotonous article.

The *Reminiscences*, however, although they partake somewhat of biography, are too casual and unstudied to be so classified. That they are almost as much autobiography, De Quincey himself recognized by publishing part of them in his *Selections Grave and Gay* volume entitled 'Autobiographic Sketches with Recollections of the Lakes'. These essays are overtly autobiographical in that they tell the story of De Quincey's leaving Oxford and settling in Grasmere. More interestingly, they are covertly autobiographical in the light they cast upon the recollecting intelligence. We learn a great deal about De Quincey from the loving *rapprochement* evident in his descriptions of nocturnal rambles, from his violent spurt of incensed pride at Wordsworth's declining to consider him a close friend of Lloyd, or from his almost savagely defensive and lyrically poignant allusions to his wife. Indeed, the *Reminiscences* are a kind of microcosm of the man's personality and interests. His penchant for analysis of the workings of the human brain, which produced the famous 'On the Knocking at

the Gate in *Macbeth*', shows itself in his psychological investigations of his memories of Grasmere and the generalization that one's mind harks back to a period before happy events that are past. Here too, in the story of Hatfield and the Maid of Buttermere, is that interest in crime which filled the *Westmorland Gazette* with assize reports and flowered in 'Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts'. De Quincey the dabbler in aesthetic theory stops at the beginning of 'Westmoreland and the Dalesmen' to put in one of those long footnotes in which he delighted, on the meaning of 'picturesque'. De Quincey the literary critic gives a level-headed analysis of Southey's pretensions as a writer, and some acute insights into the peculiar powers of Coleridge and Wordsworth. And De Quincey the student of Ricardo and author of *The Logic of Economy* appears in his strictures on Coleridge's economic theories.

Stylistically, also, *Reminiscences* is typical, showing De Quincey in the middle register of his powers. There is not the sustained bravura of 'The Dream Fugue': but there are many passages of his characteristic 'impassioned prose', intricate windings of syntax in which the weight of every word is carefully gauged so as to build elaborate and balanced periods of sense and sound:

But often and often, in years after all was gone, I have passed old Brathay, or have gone over purposely after dark, about the time when, for many a year, I used to go over to spend the evening; and, seating myself on a stone, by the side of the mountain river Brathay, have stayed for hours listening to the same sound to which so often Charles Lloyd and I used to hearken together with profound emotion and awe—the sound of pealing anthems, as if streaming from the open portals of some illimitable cathedral; for such a sound does actually arise, in many states of the weather, from the peculiar action of the river Brathay upon its rocky bed; and many times I have heard it, of a quiet night, when no stranger could have been persuaded to believe it other than the sound of choral chanting—distant, solemn, saintly.

Neither, on the other hand, are there the lamentable blotches of paraded pedantry and stilted spoofing of which he was capable. Here his humour, as in the amusing account of 'The Saracen's Head's' penurious banquet, is controlled and successful. Generally too he is able to hew closer to the line of the essay's development than his myriad-associating mind often allowed, although he still has occasion to say: 'I have been led insensibly into this

digression.' De Quincey's considerable narrative power is here well displayed in his telling of the George and Sarah Green story, in his delightful anecdotes about Coleridge's father. Something of the machinery of his narration, the skilful repetition and verbal accumulation, can be understood by comparing his version of the shirt-tail story with that in James Gillman's *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*.

The *Reminiscences* must not be judged as a book. So viewed they obviously peter out, as De Quincey's recollections thinned and his subject-matter got down to the almost nonentities of the Lakes. So viewed they are misshapen and repetitious—twice, for instance, going over the same ground about Bishop Watson. They must be judged for what they are: a series of magazine articles, in part extraordinarily good, but spun out to make as many sheets as possible at fourteen guineas each. De Quincey had been publishing in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* his 'Sketches of Life and Manners; From the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater' when, in July 1834, Coleridge died. Interrupting himself in the midst of a paper, De Quincey, like many other journalists, hastened to write a sketch; it appeared in four instalments under the simple title, 'Samuel Taylor Coleridge, by the English Opium-Eater'. Probably De Quincey was deterred from continuing to work the tempting vein of his personal acquaintance with the Lake Poets by the shocked outburst of disapproval at his indiscreetness. But the pressure of his financial need built up, and the death of his wife not only turned his mind strongly to his early days at Grasmere, but also sharpened his sense of grievance against those who he thought had injured her. At any rate, he again took up his recollections, not even waiting for Wordsworth and Southey to die, and published in January–April 1839, 'Lake Reminiscences, From 1807 to 1830. No. 1.—William Wordsworth'. The other 'Reminiscences' appeared in *Tait's* from July 1839 to August 1840, from September under the 'Sketches of Life and Manners' heading.

When De Quincey, judiciously nudged by the Edinburgh publisher James Hogg, surprised everyone by actually buckling down to the task of editing a collection of his scattered essays in *Selections Grave and Gay* (1853–60), only four Lake papers were reprinted: the essays on Coleridge and Wordsworth; 'Wordsworth and Southey', to which was attached a piece of 'Southey,

Wordsworth, and Coleridge'; and 'Recollections of Grasmere', retitled 'Early Memorials of Grasmere'. The omission of the others signifies little: De Quincey may simply not have been able to turn them up amid the welter of his study—he could never bring himself to throw away anything, and as a result had such a snowstorm of papers that he could rarely find anything—or he may have designed them for a later volume. Of the Lake papers printed, not only were the two essays on Southey severely cut and run together, but also 'Recollections of Grasmere' was substantially reduced and the articles on Wordsworth and Coleridge were revised.

Most of De Quincey's omissions in his revised text seem to have been motivated by a desire to cut out the more personal references to himself, his wife, his mother and Professor Wilson as associated with him. He does not appear to have been primarily concerned with eliminating the indiscreet revelations his contemporaries found so objectionable: he did cut out some such passages, but he also added such comments as: 'My own impression is, that neither Coleridge nor Lord Byron could have failed, eventually, to quarrel with *any* wife, though a Pandora sent down from heaven to bless him.' Many changes are stylistic, in the direction of less slangy diction and tighter construction; he cut out some discursive passages that—like many of his digressions—we can ill spare, although he at the same time could not refrain from adding elaborate footnotes. And in the revisions of 'Coleridge', not so important nor careful as those of 'Wordsworth', his hasty editorial pen sometimes even introduced repetition when he put in clarifying details which he had forgotten came a little later in the original text, making him, for example, announce the name of Allan Bank twice in eight lines.

The present edition respects De Quincey's final word, and prints where possible from the *Selections*. The mutilated 'Wordsworth and Southey' and 'Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge' are, however, restored from *Tait's*, as is the fourth part of the Coleridge essay, which was lopped off in the revised version. Some other important omissions are supplied in the notes; De Quincey's notes are signed [Q.]. Those papers not in *Selections* are reprinted from *Tait's*, except that the last paper on 'The Society of the Lakes', to which De Quincey tacked a reminiscence of 'Mrs Siddons and Hannah More' on the dubious but

characteristic grounds that he often visited in Somersetshire from the Lakes, is cut to end with his account of little Kate Wordsworth. Appropriately enough, for this brief idyll and its tragic end epitomizes the intensity of feeling which gives De Quincey's *Reminiscences* their enduring vitality.

JOHN E. JORDAN.

1961.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

THOMAS DE QUINCEY published only four books: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822, revised 1856) [which first appeared in the *London Magazine*], *Walladmor* (1825) [a free translation of a German novel], *Klosterheim, or the Masque* (1832), and *The Logic of Political Economy* (1844). The rest of his considerable output appeared in periodicals from 1818 to his death, chiefly in the *Westmorland Gazette*, the *London Magazine*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Tait's Magazine* and *Hogg's Instructor*. There is no complete collected edition. The first effort was made in Boston from 1851 to 1859 in 24 volumes. De Quincey himself edited most of the 14-volume *Edinburgh Selections Grave and Gay* (1853-60). The standard edition is *The Collected Works*, edited by David Masson (Edinburgh, 1889-90, 14 vols.), but it must be supplemented by the *Uncollected Writings*, ed. James Hogg (1890), the *Posthumous Works*, ed. A. H. Japp (1891), *De Quincey Memorials*, ed. A. H. Japp (1891), *A Diary of Thomas De Quincey, 1803*, ed. H. A. Eaton (1927), and *De Quincey at Work*, ed. W. H. Bonner (1936).

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE *

IT WAS, I think, in the month of August, but certainly in the summer season, and certainly in the year 1807, that I first saw this illustrious man. My knowledge of him as a man of most original genius began about the year 1799. A little before that time Wordsworth had published the first edition (in a single volume) of the 'Lyrical Ballads,' and into this had been introduced Mr. Coleridge's poem of the 'Ancient Mariner,' † as the contribution of an anonymous friend. It would be directing the reader's attention too much to myself if I were to linger upon this, the greatest event in the unfolding of my own mind. Let me say, in one word, that, at a period when neither the one nor the other writer was valued by the public—both having a long warfare to accomplish of contumely and ridicule before they could rise into their present estimation—I found in these poems 'the ray of a new morning,' and an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds teeming with power and beauty as yet unsuspected amongst men. I may here mention that, precisely at the same time, Professor Wilson, entirely unconnected with myself, and not even known to me until ten years later, received the same startling and profound impressions from the same volume. With feelings of reverential interest, so early and so deep, pointing towards two contemporaries, it may be supposed that I inquired eagerly after their names. But these inquiries were self-baffled; the same deep feelings which prompted my curiosity causing me to recoil from all casual opportunities of pushing the inquiry, as too generally lying amongst those who gave no sign of participating in my feelings;

* This essay on Coleridge appeared in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* in four instalments: September, October, November 1834 and January 1835. It was revised by De Quincey for volume two of *Selections Grave and Gay* in 1853. In the *Tait's* version the opening sentence declared Coleridge's 'the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and the most comprehensive in my judgment, that has yet existed amongst men'.

† De Quincey has an interesting analysis of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', oddly interpolated in his picaresque tale, *The Spanish Military Nun*.

and, extravagant as this may seem, I revolted with as much hatred from coupling the question with any occasion of insult to the persons whom it respected as a primitive Christian from throwing frankincense upon the altars of Cæsar, or a lover from giving up the name of his beloved to the coarse licence of a Bacchanalian party. It is laughable to record for how long a period my curiosity in this particular was thus self-defeated. Two years passed before I ascertained the two names. Mr. Wordsworth published *his* in the second and enlarged edition of the poems; and for Mr. Coleridge's I was 'indebted' to a private source; but I discharged that debt ill, for I quarrelled with my informant for what I considered his profane way of dealing with a subject so hallowed in my own thoughts. After this I searched, east and west, north and south, for all known works or fragments of the same authors. I had read, therefore, as respects Mr. Coleridge, the Allegory which he contributed to Mr. Southey's 'Joan of Arc.' I had read his fine Ode entitled 'France,' his Ode to the Duchess of Devonshire, and various other contributions, more or less interesting, to the two volumes of the 'Anthology' published at Bristol, about 1799-1800, by Mr. Southey; and, finally, I had, of course, read the small volume of poems published under his own name. These, however, as a juvenile and immature collection, made expressly with a view to pecuniary profit, and therefore courting expansion at any cost of critical discretion, had in general greatly disappointed me.

Meantime, it had crowned the interest which to me invested his name, that about the year 1804 or 1805 I had been informed by a gentleman from the English Lakes, who knew him as a neighbour, that he had for some time applied his whole mind to metaphysics and psychology—which happened to be my own absorbing pursuit. From 1803 to 1808, I was a student at Oxford; and, on the first occasion when I could conveniently have sought for a personal knowledge of one whom I contemplated with so much admiration, I was met by a painful assurance that he had quitted England, and was then residing at Malta, in the quality of secretary to the Governor. I began to inquire about the best route to Malta; but, as any route at that time promised an inside place in a French prison, I reconciled myself to waiting; and at last, happening to visit the Bristol Hot-wells in the summer of 1807, I had the pleasure to hear that Coleridge was not only once more upon

English ground, but within forty and odd miles of my own station. In that same hour I bent my way to the south; and, before evening, reaching a ferry on the river Bridgewater, at a village called, I think, Stogursey (*i.e.* Stoke de Courcy, by way of distinction from some other Stoke), I crossed it, and a few miles farther attained my object—viz., the little town of Nether Stowey, amongst the Quantock Hills. Here I had been assured that I should find Mr. Coleridge, at the house of his old friend Mr. Poole.* On presenting myself, however, to that gentleman, I found that Coleridge was absent at Lord Egmont's, an elder brother (by the father's side) of Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister, assassinated five years later; and, as it was doubtful whether he might not then be on the wing to another friend's in the town of Bridgewater, I consented willingly, until his motions should be ascertained, to stay a day or two with this Mr. Poole—a man on his own account well deserving a separate notice; for, as Coleridge afterwards remarked to me, he was almost an ideal model for a useful member of Parliament. I found him a stout, plain-looking farmer, leading a bachelor life, in a rustic, old-fashioned house; the house, however, upon further acquaintance, proving to be amply furnished with modern luxuries, and especially with a good library, superbly mounted in all departments bearing at all upon political philosophy; and the farmer turning out a polished and liberal Englishman, who had travelled extensively, and had so entirely dedicated himself to the service of his humble fellow-countrymen—the hewers of wood and drawers of water in this southern part of Somersetshire—that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their difficulties; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died in or about the town of Nether Stowey.

The first morning of my visit, Mr. Poole was so kind as to propose, knowing my admiration of Wordsworth, that we should ride over to Alfoxton—a place of singular interest to myself, as having been occupied in his unmarried days by that poet, during the minority of Mr. St. Aubyn, its present youthful proprietor. At this delightful spot, the ancient residence of an ancient English

* Joseph Cottle's letter to Thomas Poole, introducing De Quincey and describing him as 'a Scholar and a man of genius, who had a high admiration for Coleridge's character', is dated 26th July 1807.

family, and surrounded by those ferny Quantock Hills which are so beautifully glanced at in the poem of 'Ruth,' Wordsworth, accompanied by his sister, had passed a good deal of the interval between leaving the University (Cambridge) and the period of his final settlement amongst his native lakes of Westmoreland: some allowance, however, must be made—but how much I do not accurately know—for a long residence in France, for a short one in North Germany, for an intermitting one in London, and for a regular domestication with his sister at Race Down in Dorsetshire.

Returning late from this interesting survey, we found ourselves without company at dinner; and, being thus seated *tête-à-tête*, Mr. Poole propounded the following question to me, which I mention because it furnished me with the first hint of a singular infirmity besetting Coleridge's mind:—'Pray, my young friend, did you ever form any opinion, or, rather, did it ever happen to you to meet with any rational opinion or conjecture of others, upon that most revolting dogma of Pythagoras about beans? You know what I mean: that monstrous doctrine in which he asserts that a man might as well, for the wickedness of the thing, eat his own grandmother as meddle with beans.'

'Yes,' I replied; 'the line is, I believe, in the Golden Verses. I remember it well.'

P.—'True: now, our dear excellent friend Coleridge, than whom God never made a creature more divinely endowed, yet, strange it is to say, sometimes steals from other people, just as you or I might do; I beg your pardon—just as a poor creature like myself might do, that sometimes have not wherewithal to make a figure from my own exchequer: and the other day, at a dinner party, this question arising about Pythagoras and his beans, Coleridge gave us an interpretation which, from his manner, I suspect to have been not original. Think, therefore, if you have anywhere read a plausible solution.' *

* Poole denied having made this charge of plagiarism. He wrote H. N. Coleridge: 'As for the conversation he states as having had with me, I am sure it must be incorrect: for as I never considered Coleridge as a Plagiarist, I never could have said what he has given me' (22nd June 1835). De Quincey's accusations stirred up several defences: J. C. Hare, in the *British Magazine* and *Monthly Register of Religious and Ecclesiastical Information* (January 1835); James Gillman in the official *Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, the first volume only of which appeared (London, 1838); and Coleridge's

'I have: and it was a German author. This German, understand, is a poor stick of a man, not to be named on the same day with Coleridge: so that, if Coleridge should appear to have robbed him, be assured that he has done the scamp too much honour.'

P.—'Well: what says the German?'

'Why, you know the use made in Greece of beans in voting and balloting? Well: the German says that Pythagoras speaks symbolically; meaning that electioneering, or, more generally, all interference with political intrigues, is fatal to a philosopher's pursuits and their appropriate serenity. Therefore, says he, follower of mine, abstain from public affairs as you would from parricide.'

P.—'Well, then, Coleridge *has* done the scamp too much honour: for, by Jove, that is the very explanation he gave us!'

Here was a trait of Coleridge's mind, to be first made known to me by his best friend, and first published to the world by me, the foremost of his admirers! But both of us had sufficient reasons:—Mr. Poole knew that, stumbled on by accident, such a discovery would be likely to impress upon a man as yet unacquainted with Coleridge a most injurious jealousy with regard to all he might write: whereas, frankly avowed by one who knew him best, the fact was disarmed of its sting; since it thus became evident that, where the case had been best known and most investigated, it had not operated to his serious disadvantage. On the same argument,—to forestall, that is to say, other discoverers, who would make a more unfriendly use of the discovery,—and also as matters of literary curiosity, I shall here point out a few others of Coleridge's unacknowledged obligations, noticed by myself in a very wide course of reading.¹

daughter, Sara Coleridge, in a long preface to the second edition of the *Biographia Literaria* (London, 1847) The general line of defence was that Coleridge made broad acknowledgments of indebtedness, was careless in specific instances, and perhaps used materials from his notebooks which he had copied without indicating the source and later thought were his own. As De Quincey remarks in his note, a much fiercer attack entitled 'The Plagiarism of S. T. Coleridge' appeared in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (March 1840), charitably concluding that Coleridge was under some 'strange intellectual hallucination'

¹ With respect to all these cases of apparent plagiarism, see an explanatory Note at the end of this essay. [Q.]

1. The Hymn to Chamouni is an expansion of a short poem in stanzas, upon the same subject, by Frederica Brun, a female poet of Germany, previously known to the world under her maiden name of Münter. The mere framework of the poem is exactly the same—an appeal to the most impressive features of the regal mountain (Mont Blanc), adjuring them to proclaim their author: the torrent, for instance, is required to say by whom it had been arrested in its headlong raving, and stiffened, as by the petrific touch of Death, into everlasting pillars of ice; and the answer to these impassioned apostrophes is made by the same choral burst of rapture. In mere logic, therefore, and even as to the choice of circumstances, Coleridge's poem is a translation. On the other hand, by a judicious amplification of some topics, and by its far deeper tone of lyrical enthusiasm, the dry bones of the German outline have been awakened by Coleridge into the fulness of life. It is not, therefore, a paraphrase, but a re-cast of the original. And how was this calculated, if frankly avowed, to do Coleridge any injury with the judicious?

2. A more singular case of Coleridge's infirmity is this:—In a very noble passage of 'France,' a fine expression or two occur from 'Samson Agonistes.' Now, to take a phrase or an inspiring line from the great fathers of poetry, even though no marks of quotation should be added, carries with it no charge of plagiarism. Milton is justly presumed to be as familiar to the ear as nature to the eye; and to steal from him as impossible as to appropriate, or sequester to a private use, some 'bright particular star.' And there is a good reason for rejecting the typographical marks of quotation: they break the continuity of the passion, by reminding the reader of a printed book; on which account Milton himself (to give an instance) has not marked the sublime words, 'tormented all the air' as borrowed; nor has Wordsworth, in applying to an unprincipled woman of commanding beauty the memorable expression 'a weed of glorious feature,' thought it necessary to acknowledge it as originally belonging to Spenser. Some dozens of similar cases might be adduced from Milton. But Coleridge, when saying of republican France that,

*'Insupportably advancing,
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's tramp,'*

not satisfied with omitting the marks of acknowledgment, thought

fit positively to deny that he was indebted to Milton. Yet who could forget that semi-chorus in the 'Samson' where the 'bold Ascalonite' is described as having 'fled from his lion ramp'? Or who, that was not in this point liable to some hallucination of judgment, would have ventured on a public challenge (for virtually it was that) to produce from the 'Samson' words so impossible to be overlooked as those of 'insupportably advancing the foot'? The result was that one of the critical journals placed the two passages in juxtaposition and left the reader to his own conclusions with regard to the poet's veracity. But, in this instance, it was common sense rather than veracity which the facts impeach.

3. In the year 1810 I happened to be amusing myself by reading, in their chronological order, the great classical circumnavigations of the earth; and, coming to Shelvocke, I met with a passage to this effect:—That Hatley, his second captain (*i.e.* lieutenant), being a melancholy man, was possessed by a fancy that some long season of foul weather, in the solitary sea which they were then traversing, was due to an albatross which had steadily pursued the ship; upon which he shot the bird, but without mending their condition. There at once I saw the germ of the 'Ancient Mariner'; and I put a question to Coleridge accordingly. Could it have been imagined that he would see cause utterly to disown so slight an obligation to Shelvocke? Wordsworth, a man of stern veracity, on hearing of this, professed his inability to understand Coleridge's meaning; the fact being notorious, as he told me, that Coleridge had derived from the very passage I had cited the original hint for the action of the poem; though it is very possible, from something which Coleridge said on another occasion, that, before meeting a fable in which to embody his ideas, he had meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream-scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes.

4. All these cases amount to nothing at all as cases of plagiarism, and for this reason expose the more conspicuously that obliquity of feeling which could seek to decline the very slight acknowledgments required. But now I come to a case of real and palpable plagiarism; yet that, too, of a nature to be quite unaccountable in a man of Coleridge's attainments. It is not very likely that this particular case will soon be detected; but others will. Yet who knows? Eight hundred or a thousand years hence,

some reviewer may arise who, having read the 'Biographia Literaria' of Coleridge, will afterwards read the 'Philosophical —' ¹ of Schelling, the great Bavarian professor—a man in some respects worthy to be Coleridge's assessor; and he will then make a singular discovery. In the 'Biographia Literaria' occurs a dissertation upon the reciprocal relations of the *Esse* and the *Cogitare*,—that is, of the *objective* and the *subjective*: and an attempt is made, by inverting the postulates from which the argument starts, to show how each might arise as a product, by an intelligible genesis, from the other. It is a subject which, since the time of Fichte, has much occupied the German metaphysicians; and many thousands of essays have been written on it, or indirectly so, of which many hundreds have been read by many tens of persons. Coleridge's essay, in particular, is prefaced by a few words in which, aware of his coincidence with Schelling, he declares his willingness to acknowledge himself indebted to so great a man in any case where the truth would allow him to do so; but, in this particular case, insisting on the impossibility that he could have borrowed arguments which he had first seen some years after he had thought out the whole hypothesis *proprio Marte*. After this, what was my astonishment to find that the entire essay, from the first word to the last, is a *verbatim* translation from Schelling, with no attempt in a single instance to appropriate the paper by developing the arguments or by diversifying the illustrations? Some other obligations to Schelling, of a slighter kind, I have met with in the 'Biographia Literaria'; but this was a bare-faced plagiarism, which could in prudence have been risked only by relying too much upon the slight knowledge of German literature in this country, and especially of that section of the German literature. Had, then, Coleridge any need to borrow from Schelling? Did he borrow *in forma pauperis*? Not at all: there lay the wonder. He spun daily, and at all hours, for mere amusement of his own activities, and from the loom of his own magical brain, theories more gorgeous by far, and supported by a pomp and luxury of images such as neither Schelling—no, nor any German that ever breathed, not John Paul—could have emulated in his dreams. With the riches of El Dorado lying about him, he would

¹ I forget the exact title, not having seen the book since 1823, and then only for one day; but I believe it was Schelling's 'Kleine Philosophische Werke.' [Q.]

condescend to filch a handful of gold from any man whose purse he fancied, and in fact reproduced in a new form, applying itself to intellectual wealth, that maniacal propensity which is sometimes well known to attack enormous proprietors and millionaires for acts of petty larceny. The last Duke of Anc—— could not abstain from exercising his furtive mania upon articles so humble as silver spoons; and it was the nightly care of a pious daughter, watching over the aberrations of her father, to have his pockets searched by a confidential valet, and the claimants of the purloined articles traced out.

Many cases have crossed me in life of people, otherwise not wanting in principle, who had habits, or at least hankerings, of the same kind. And the phrenologists, I believe, are well acquainted with the case, its signs, its progress, and its history. Dismissing, however, this subject, which I have at all noticed only that I might anticipate, and (in old English) that I might *prevent*, the uncandid interpreter of its meaning, I will assert finally that, after having read for thirty years in the same track as Coleridge—that track in which few of any age will ever follow us, such as German metaphysicians, Latin Schoolmen, thaumaturgic Platonists, religious Mystics—and having thus discovered a large variety of trivial thefts, I do, nevertheless, most heartily believe him to have been as entirely original in all his capital pretensions as any one man that ever has existed; as Archimedes in ancient days, or as Shakspeare in modern. Did the reader ever see Milton's account of the rubbish contained in the Greek and Latin Fathers? * Or did he ever read a statement of the monstrous chaos with which an African Obeah man stuffs his enchanted scarecrows? Or, take a more common illustration, did he ever amuse himself by searching the pockets of a child—three years old, suppose—when buried in slumber after a long summer's day of out-o'-doors intense activity? I have done this; and, for the amusements of the child's mother, have analyzed the contents, and drawn up a formal register of the whole. Philosophy is puzzled, conjecture and hypothesis are confounded, in the attempt to explain the law of selection which *can* have presided in the child's labours; stones

* Masson notes that De Quincey is referring to a passage in Milton's *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*: 'Whatever Time, or the heedless hand of blind Chance, hath drawn down from of old to this present in her huge dragnet, whether fish, or seaweed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, these are the Fathers.'

remarkable only for weight, old rusty hinges, nails, crooked skewers stolen when the cook had turned her back, rags, broken glass, tea-cups having the bottom knocked out, and loads of similar jewels, were the prevailing articles in this *procès-verbal*. Yet, doubtless, much labour had been incurred, some sense of danger perhaps had been faced, and the anxieties of a conscious robber endured, in order to amass this splendid treasure. Such in value were the robberies of Coleridge; such their usefulness to himself or anybody else; and such the circumstances of uneasiness under which he had committed them. I return to my narrative.

Two or three days had slipped away in waiting for Coleridge's re-appearance at Nether Stowey, when suddenly Lord Egmont called upon Mr. Poole, with a present for Coleridge: it was a canister of peculiarly fine snuff, which Coleridge now took profusely. Lord Egmont, on this occasion, spoke of Coleridge in the terms of excessive admiration, and urged Mr. Poole to put him upon undertaking some great monumental work, that might furnish a sufficient arena for the display of his various and rare accomplishments; for his multiform erudition on the one hand, for his splendid power of theorizing and combining large and remote notices of facts on the other. And he suggested, judiciously enough, as one theme which offered a field at once large enough and indefinite enough to suit a mind that could not show its full compass of power unless upon very plastic materials—a History of Christianity, in its progress and in its chief divarications into Church and Sect, with a continual reference to the relations subsisting between Christianity and the current philosophy; their occasional connections or approaches, and their constant mutual repulsions. 'But, at any rate, let him do something,' said Lord Egmont; 'for at present he talks very much like an angel, and does nothing at all.' Lord Egmont I understood from everybody to be a truly good and benevolent man; and on this occasion he spoke with an earnestness which agreed with my previous impression. Coleridge, he said, was now in the prime of his powers—uniting something of youthful vigour with sufficient experience of life; having the benefit, beside, of vast meditation, and of reading unusually discursive. No man had ever been better qualified to revive the heroic period of literature in England, and to give a character of weight to the philosophic erudition of the country upon the Continent. 'And what a pity,' he added, 'if this man

were, after all, to vanish like an apparition, and you, I, and a few others, who have witnessed his grand *bravuras* of display, were to have the usual fortune of ghost-seers, in meeting no credit for any statements that we might vouch on his behalf!

On this occasion we learned, for the first time, that Lord Egmont's carriage had, some days before, conveyed Coleridge to Bridgewater, with a purpose of staying one single day at that place, and then returning to Mr. Poole's. From the sort of laugh with which Lord Egmont taxed his own simplicity, in having confided at all in the stability of any Coleridgian plan, I now gathered that procrastination in excess was, or had become, a marking feature in Coleridge's daily life. Nobody who knew him ever thought of depending on any appointment he might make: spite of his uniformly honourable intentions, nobody attached any weight to his assurances *in re futura*: those who asked him to dinner or any other party, as a matter of course, sent a carriage for him, and went personally or by proxy to fetch him; and, as to letters, unless the address were in some female hand that commanded his affectionate esteem, he tossed them all into one general *dead-letter bureau*, and rarely, I believe, opened them at all. Bourrienne mentions a mode of abridging the trouble attached to a very extensive correspondence, by which infinite labour was saved to himself, and to Napoleon, when First Consul. Nine out of ten letters, supposing them letters of business with official applications of a special kind, he contends, answer themselves: in other words, time alone must soon produce events which virtually contain the answer. On this principle the letters were opened periodically, after intervals, suppose, of six weeks; and, at the end of that time, it was found that not many remained to require any further more particular answer. Coleridge's plan, however, was shorter: he opened none, I understood, and answered none. At least such was his habit at that time. But, on that same day, all this, which I heard now for the first time, and with much concern, was fully explained; for already he was under the full dominion of opium, as he himself revealed to me, and with a deep expression of horror at the hideous bondage, in a private walk of some length which I took with him about sunset.

Lord Egmont's information, and the knowledge now gained of Coleridge's habits, making it very uncertain when I might see him in my present hospitable quarters, I immediately took my leave of

Mr. Poole, and went over to Bridgewater. I had received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting; and, in riding down a main street of Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I will describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large, and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess which mixed with their light that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie; for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn-door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him; he started, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simple perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position amongst daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. The hospitable family with whom he was domesticated were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings: they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge they all testified deep affection and esteem—sentiments in which the whole town of Bridgewater seemed to share; for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I walked out with him; and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge, on this occasion, by the courteous attentions of young and old.

All the people of station and weight in the place, and apparently all the ladies, were abroad to enjoy the lovely summer evening; and not a party passed without some mark of smiling recognition, and the majority stopping to make personal inquiries about his

health, and to express their anxiety that he should make a lengthened stay amongst them. Certain I am, from the lively esteem expressed towards Coleridge at this time by the people of Bridgewater, that a very large subscription might, in that town, have been raised to support him amongst them, in the character of a lecturer, or philosophical professor. Especially I remarked that the young men of the place manifested the most liberal interest in all that concerned him; and I can add my attestation to that of Mr. Coleridge himself, when describing an evening spent amongst the enlightened tradesmen of Birmingham, that nowhere is more unaffected good sense exhibited, and particularly nowhere more elasticity and *freshness* of mind, than in the conversation of the reading men in manufacturing towns. In Kendal, especially, in Bridgewater, and in Manchester, I have witnessed more interesting conversations, as much information, and more natural eloquence in conveying it, than usually in literary cities, or in places professedly learned. One reason for this is that in trading towns the time is more happily distributed; the day given to business and active duties—the evening to relaxation; on which account, books, conversation, and literary leisure are more cordially enjoyed: the same satiation never can take place which too frequently deadens the genial enjoyment of those who have a surfeit of books and a monotony of leisure. Another reason is that more simplicity of manner may be expected, and more natural picturesqueness of conversation, more open expression of character, in places where people have no previous name to support. Men in trading towns are not afraid to open their lips for fear they should disappoint your expectations, nor do they strain for showy sentiments that they may meet them. But, elsewhere, many are the men who stand in awe of their own reputation: not a word which is unstudied, not a movement in the spirit of natural freedom, dare they give way to, because it might happen that on review something would be seen to retract or to qualify—something not properly planed and chiselled to build into the general architecture of an artificial reputation. But to return:—

Coleridge led me to a drawing-room, rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception. He told me that there would be a very large dinner party on that day, which, perhaps, might be disagreeable to a perfect stranger; but, if not,

he could assure me of a most hospitable welcome from the family. I was too anxious to see him under all aspects to think of declining this invitation. That point being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive. What I mean by saying that his transitions were 'just' is by way of contradistinction to that mode of conversation which courts variety through links of *verbal* connections. Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most when, in fact, his resistance to the wandering instinct was greatest—viz., when the compass and huge circuit by which his illustrations moved travelled farthest into remote regions before they began to revolve. Long before this coming round commenced most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relations to the dominant theme. Had the conversation been thrown upon paper, it might have been easy to trace the continuity of the links; just as in Bishop Berkeley's 'Siris,'¹ from a pedestal so low and abject, so culinary, as Tar Water, the method of preparing it, and its medicinal effects, the dissertation ascends, like Jacob's ladder, by just gradations, into the Heaven of Heavens and the thrones of the Trinity. But Heaven is there connected with earth by the Homeric chain of gold; and, being subject to steady examination, it is easy to trace the links; whereas, in conversation, the loss of a single word may cause the whole cohesion to disappear from view. However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic the most severe was as inalienable from his modes of thinking as grammar from his language.

On the present occasion, the original theme, started by myself, was Hartley and the Hartleian theory. I had carried as a little

¹ *Sciris* ought to have been the title—i.e. *Σειρίς*, a chain. From this defect in the orthography, I did not in my boyish days perceive, nor could obtain any light upon, its meaning. [Q.]

present to Coleridge a scarce Latin pamphlet, 'De Ideis,' written by Hartley about 1746,—that is, about three years earlier than the publication of his great work.* He had also precluded to this great work in a little English medical tract upon Joanna Stephens's medicine for the stone; for indeed Hartley was the person upon whose evidence the House of Commons had mainly relied in giving to that same Joanna a reward of £5000 for her idle medicines—an application of public money not without its use, in so far as it engaged men by selfish motives to cultivate the public service, and to attempt public problems of very difficult solution; but else, in that particular instance, perfectly idle, as the groans of three generations since Joanna's era have too feelingly established. It is known to most literary people that Coleridge was, in early life, so passionate an admirer of the Hartleian philosophy that 'Hartley' was the sole baptismal name which he gave to his eldest child; and in an early poem, entitled 'Religious Musings,' he has characterized Hartley as

'Him of mortal kind
Wisest, him first who mark'd the ideal tribes
Up the fine fibres through the sentient brain
Pass in fine surges.'

But at present (August 1807) all this was a forgotten thing. Coleridge was so profoundly ashamed of the shallow Unitarianism of Hartley, and so disgusted to think that he could at any time have countenanced that creed, that he would scarcely allow to Hartley the reverence which is undoubtedly his due; for I must contend that, waiving all question of the extent to which Hartley would have pushed it (as though the law of association accounted not only for our complex pleasures and pains, but also might be made to explain the act of ratiocination),—waiving also the physical substratum of nervous vibrations and miniature vibrations to which he has chosen to marry his theory of association;—all this apart, I must contend that the 'Essay on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations' stands forward as a specimen almost unique of elaborate theorizing, and a monument of

* De Quincey is doubtless referring to Hartley's *Conjecturae quaedam de sensu moto et idearum generatione* (1746). His memorial garbling of this title yet accuracy on the date of publication is typical of his phenomenal but untrustworthy memory.

absolute beauty in the impression left of its architectural grace. In this respect it has, to my mind, the spotless beauty and the ideal proportions of some Grecian statue. However, I confess that, being myself, from my earliest years, a reverential believer in the doctrine of the Trinity, simply because I never attempted to bring all things within the mechanic understanding, and because, like Sir Thomas Browne, my mind almost demanded mysteries in so mysterious a system of relations as those which connect us with another world, and also because the farther my understanding opened the more I perceived of dim analogies to strengthen my creed, and because nature herself, mere physical nature, has mysteries no less profound; * for these, and for many other '*because*s,' I could not reconcile with my general reverence for Mr. Coleridge the fact, so often reported to me, that he was a Unitarian. † But, said some Bristol people to me, not only is he a Unitarian—he is also a Socinian. In that case, I replied, I cannot hold him a Christian. I am a liberal man, and have no bigotry or hostile feelings towards a Socinian; but I can never think that man a Christian who has blotted out of his scheme the very powers by which only the great offices and functions of

* *Tait's* adds: 'and because the simplest doctrine of motion rests upon an ultimate fact, which all the wisdom of the schools will never explain; and because that vulgar puzzle of Achilles and the Tortoise never was and never will be cleared up; ** and finally, because I had begun to suspect (what afterwards Coleridge more fully convinced me of) that the unity demanded by the *so-distant* Unitarian is a chimera and a total blunder,—being, in fact, not unity, but what the schoolmen call *unicity*; for, as they insist, without previous multitude (meaning by multitude simply plurality) there can be no proper unity; for, else, where is the *union*—where is the *To unitum*?

† *Tait's* continues: 'A Unitarian, I often exclaimed, and a philosopher! Nay, it cannot be denied, the profoundest of philosophers! and one destined to sound the intellectual depths, and the depths below depths, beyond any other of the children of men.'

** So cleared up, I mean, as to make it other than a mystery. Else, in a sense which, leaving a great mystery behind, clears it of contradiction, it was solved satisfactorily to my mind by Mr. Coleridge,—I believe in print; but at any rate in conversation. I had remarked to him that the '*sophism*,' as it is usually called, but the difficulty as it should be called, of Achilles and the Tortoise, which has puzzled all the sages of Greece, was, in fact, merely another form of the perplexity which besets decimal fractions,—that, for example, if you throw $\frac{2}{3}$ into a decimal form, it will never terminate, but be 666666, &c., *ad infinitum*. 'Yes,' Coleridge replied: 'the apparent absurdity in the Grecian problem arises thus,—because it assumes the infinite divisibility of *space*, but drops out of view the corresponding infinity of *time*.' There was a flash of lightning, which illuminated a darkness that had existed for twenty-three centuries!

Christianity can be sustained; neither can I think that any man, though he make himself a marvellously clever disputant, ever could tower upwards into a very great philosopher unless he should begin or should end with Christianity. Kant is a dubious exception. Not that I mean to question his august pretensions, so far as they went, and in his proper line. Within his own circle none durst tread but he. But that circle was limited. He was called, by one who weighed him well, the *alles-zermalmender*, the world-shattering Kant. He could destroy—his intellect was essentially destructive. He was the Gog and he was the Magog of Hunnish desolation to the existing schemes of Philosophy. He probed them; he showed the vanity of vanities which besieged their foundations—the rottenness below, the hollowness above. But he had no instincts of creation or restoration within his Apollyon mind; for he had no love, no faith, no self-distrust, no humility, no childlike docility; all which qualities belonged essentially to Coleridge's mind, and waited only for manhood and sorrow to bring them forward.

Who can read without indignation of Kant that, at his own table, in social sincerity and confidential talk, let him say what he would in his books, he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation; that he planted his glory in the grave, and was ambitious of rotting for ever? The King of Prussia, though a personal friend of Kant's, found himself obliged to level his state thunders at some of his doctrines, and terrified him in his advance; else I am persuaded that Kant would have formally delivered Atheism from the professor's chair, and would have enthroned the horrid Ghoulish creed (which privately he professed) in the University of Königsberg. It required the artillery of a great king to make him pause: his menacing or warning letter to Kant is extant. The general notion is, that the royal logic applied so austere to the public conduct of Kant in his professor's chair was of that kind which rests its strength 'upon thirty legions.' My own belief is that the king had private information of Kant's ultimate tendencies as revealed in his table-talk. The fact is that, as the stomach has been known, by means of its own potent acid secretion, to attack not only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed) sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure, so, and with the same preternatural extension of instinct, did Kant carry forward his

destroying functions, until he turned them upon his own hopes and the pledges of his own superiority to the dog, the ape, the worm. But '*exoriare aliquis*'—and some philosopher, I am persuaded, *will* arise; and 'one sling of some victorious arm' ('Paradise Lost,' B. x.) will yet destroy the destroyer, in so far as he has applied himself to the destruction of Christian hope. For my faith is that, though a great man may, by a rare possibility, be an infidel, an intellect of the highest order must build upon Christianity. A very clever architect may choose to show his power by building with insufficient materials; but the supreme architect must require the very best, because the perfection of the forms cannot be shown but in the perfection of the matter.

On these accounts I took the liberty of doubting, as often as I heard the reports I have mentioned of Coleridge; and I now found that he disowned most solemnly (and I may say penitentially) whatever had been true in these reports. Coleridge told me that it had cost him a painful effort, but not a moment's hesitation, to abjure his Unitarianism, from the circumstance that he had amongst the Unitarians many friends, to some of whom he was greatly indebted for great kindness. In particular, he mentioned Mr. Estlin of Bristol, a distinguished Dissenting clergyman, as one whom it grieved him to grieve. But he would not dissemble his altered views. I will add, at the risk of appearing to dwell too long on religious topics, that, on this my first introduction to Coleridge, he reverted with strong compunction to a sentiment which he had expressed in earlier days upon prayer. In one of his youthful poems, speaking of God, he had said—

‘Of whose omniscient and all-spreading love
Aught to implore were impotence of mind.’

This sentiment he now so utterly condemned that, on the contrary, he told me, as his own peculiar opinion, that the act of praying was the very highest energy of which the human heart was capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties; and the great mass of worldly men, and of learned men, he pronounced absolutely incapable of prayer.

For about three hours he had continued to talk, and in the course of this performance he had delivered many most striking aphorisms, embalming more weight of truth, and separately more

deserving to be themselves embalmed, than would easily be found in a month's course of select reading.* In the midst of our conversation, if that can be called conversation which I so seldom sought to interrupt, and which did not often leave openings for contribution, the door opened, and a lady entered. She was in person full and rather below the common height; whilst her face showed to my eye some prettiness of rather a commonplace order. Coleridge paused upon her entrance; his features, however, announced no particular complacency, and did not relax into a smile. In a frigid tone he said, whilst turning to me, 'Mrs. Coleridge'; in some slight way he then presented me to her: I bowed; and the lady almost immediately retired. From this short but ungenial scene, I gathered, what I afterwards learned redundantly, that Coleridge's marriage had not been a very happy one. But let not the reader misunderstand me. Never was there a baser insinuation, viler in the motive, or more ignoble in the manner, than that passage in some lampoon of Lord Byron's, where, by way of vengeance on Mr. Southey (who was the sole delinquent), he described both him and Coleridge as having married 'two milliners from Bath.' † Everybody knows what is *meant* to be conveyed in that expression, though it would be hard, indeed, if, even at Bath, there should be any class under such a fatal curse, condemned so irretrievably, and so hopelessly prejudged, that ignominy must, at any rate, attach, in virtue of a mere name or designation, to the mode by which they gained their daily bread, or possibly supported the declining years of a parent. However, in this case, the whole sting of the libel was a pure falsehood of Lord Byron's. Bath was not the native city, nor at any time the residence, of the ladies in question, but Bristol. As to the other word, '*milliners*,' that is not worth inquiring about. Whether they, or any one of their family, ever *did* exercise this profession, I do not know; they were, at all events, too young, when removed by marriage from Bristol, to have been much tainted by the worldly feelings which may beset such a mode of life. But, what is more to the purpose, I heard, at this time, in Bristol, from Mr. Cottle, the

* In *Tait's* De Quincey wrote more extravagantly 'than any that are on record'.

† When he and Southey, following the same path
Espoused two partners (milliners of Bath)

Don Juan, III. xciii.

author, a man of high principle, as also from his accomplished sisters,—from the ladies, again, who had succeeded Mrs. Hannah More in her school, and who enjoyed her entire confidence,—that the whole family of four or five sisters had maintained an irreproachable character, though naturally exposed, by their personal attractions, to some peril, and to the malevolence of envy. This declaration, which I could strengthen by other testimony equally disinterested, if it were at all necessary, I owe to truth; and I must also add, upon a knowledge more personal, that Mrs. Coleridge was, in all circumstances of her married life, a virtuous wife and a conscientious mother; and, as a mother, she showed at times a most meritorious energy. In particular, I remember that, wishing her daughter to acquire the Italian language, and having in her retirement at Keswick no means of obtaining a master, she set to work resolutely, under Mr. Southey's guidance, to learn the language herself, at a time of life when such attainments are not made with ease or pleasure. She became mistress of the language in a very respectable extent, and then communicated her new accomplishment to her most interesting daughter.*

I go on, therefore, to say, that Coleridge afterwards made me, as doubtless some others, a confidant in this particular. What he had to complain of was simply incompatibility of temper and disposition. Wanting all cordial admiration, or indeed comprehension, of her husband's intellectual powers, Mrs. Coleridge wanted the original basis for affectionate patience and candour. Hearing from everybody that Coleridge was a man of most

* *Tait's* continues: 'Meantime, I, for my part, owe Mrs. Coleridge no particular civility: and I see no reason why I should mystify the account of Coleridge's life or habits, by dissembling what is notorious to so many thousands of people. An insult once offered by Mrs. Coleridge to a female relative of my own, as much superior to Mrs. Coleridge in the spirit of courtesy and kindness, which ought to preside in the intercourse between females, as she was in the splendour of her beauty, would have given me a dispensation from all terms of consideration beyond the restraints of strict justice. My offence was—the having procrastinated in some trifling affair of returning a volume, or a MS.; and during my absence at a distance of four or five hundred miles, Mrs. Coleridge thought fit to write a letter, filled with the most intemperate expressions of anger, addressed to one whom she did not know by sight, and who could in no way be answerable for my delinquencies.'

extraordinary endowments, and attaching little weight, perhaps, to the distinction between popular talents and such as by their very nature are doomed to a slower progress in the public esteem, she naturally looked to see, at least, an extraordinary measure of worldly consequence attend upon their exercise. Now, had Coleridge * been as persevering and punctual as the great mass of professional men, and had he given no reason to throw the *onus* of the different result upon his own different habits, in that case this result might, possibly and eventually, have been set down to the peculiar constitution of his powers, and their essential maladaptation to the English market. But, this trial having never fairly been made, it was natural to impute his non-success exclusively to his own irregular applications, and to his carelessness in forming judicious connections. In circumstances such as these, however, no matter how caused or how palliated, was laid a sure ground of discontent and fretfulness in any woman's mind, not unusually indulgent or unusually magnanimous. Coleridge, besides, assured me that his marriage was not his own deliberate act, but was in a manner forced upon his sense of honour by the scrupulous Southey, who insisted that he had gone too far in his attentions to Miss Fricker for any honourable retreat. On the other hand, a neutral spectator of the parties protested to me, that, if ever in his life he had seen a man under deep fascination, and what he would have called desperately in love, Coleridge, in relation to Miss F., was that man. Be that as it might, circumstances occurred soon after the marriage which placed all the parties in a trying situation for their candour and good temper. I had a full outline of the situation from two of those who were chiefly interested, and a partial one from a third: nor can it be denied that all the parties offended in point of prudence. A young lady became a neighbour, and a daily companion of Coleridge's walks, whom I will not describe more particularly than by saying that intellectually she was very much superior to Mrs. Coleridge. That superiority alone, when made conspicuous by its effects in winning Coleridge's regard and society, could not but be deeply mortifying to a young wife. However, it was moderated to her feelings by two considerations:—1. That the young lady was much too kind-hearted to have designed any annoyance in this

* *Tait's* has 'poor Coleridge'.

triumph, or to express any exultation; 2. That no shadow of suspicion settled upon the moral conduct or motives of either party: the young lady was always attended by her brother; she had no personal charms; and it was manifest that mere intellectual sympathies, in reference to literature and natural scenery, had associated them in their daily walks.

Still, it is a bitter trial to a young married woman to sustain any sort of competition with a female of her own age for any part of her husband's regard, or any share of his company. Mrs. Coleridge, not having the same relish for long walks or rural scenery, and their residence being, at this time, in a very sequestered village, was condemned to a daily renewal of this trial. Accidents of another kind embittered it still further: often it would happen that the walking party returned drenched with rain; in which case, the young lady, with a laughing gaiety, and evidently unconscious of any liberty that she was taking, or any wound that she was inflicting, would run up to Mrs. Coleridge's wardrobe, array herself, without leave asked, in Mrs. Coleridge's dresses, and make herself merry with her own unceremoniousness and Mrs. Coleridge's gravity. In all this, she took no liberty that she would not most readily have granted in return; she confided too unthinkingly in what she regarded as the natural privileges of friendship; and as little thought that she had been receiving or exacting a favour, as, under an exchange of their relative positions, she would have claimed to confer one. But Mrs. Coleridge viewed her freedoms with a far different eye: she felt herself no longer the entire mistress of her own house; she held a divided empire; and it barbed the arrow to her womanly feelings that Coleridge treated any sallies of resentment which might sometimes escape her as narrow-mindedness; whilst, on the other hand, her own female servant, and others in the same rank of life, began to drop expressions which alternately implied pity for her as an injured woman, or contempt for her as a very tame one.

The reader will easily apprehend the situation, and the unfortunate results which it boded to the harmony of a young married couple, without further illustration. Whether Coleridge would not, under any circumstances, have become indifferent to a wife not eminently capable of enlightened sympathy with his own ruling pursuits, I do not undertake to pronounce. My own

impression is, that neither Coleridge nor Lord Byron could have failed, eventually, to quarrel with *any* wife, though a Pandora sent down from heaven to bless him. But, doubtless, this consummation must have been hastened by a situation which exposed Mrs. Coleridge to an invidious comparison with a more intellectual person; as, on the other hand, it was most unfortunate for Coleridge himself to be continually compared with one so ideally correct and regular in his habits as Mr. Southey. Thus was their domestic peace prematurely soured: embarrassments of a pecuniary nature would be likely to demand continual sacrifices; no depth of affection existing, these would create disgust or dissension; and at length each would believe that their union had originated in circumstances overruling their own deliberate choice.

The gloom, however, and the weight of dejection which sat upon Coleridge's countenance and deportment at this time could not be accounted for by a disappointment (if such it were) to which time must, long ago, have reconciled him. Mrs. Coleridge, if not turning to him the more amiable aspects of her character, was at any rate a respectable partner. And the season of youth was now passed. They had been married about ten years; had had four children, of whom three survived; and the interests of a father were now replacing those of a husband. Yet never had I beheld so profound an expression of cheerless despondency. And the restless activity of Coleridge's mind, in chasing abstract truths, and burying himself in the dark places of human speculation, seemed to me, in a great measure, an attempt to escape out of his own personal wretchedness. I was right. In this instance, at least, I had hit the mark; and Coleridge bore witness himself at an after period to the truth of my divination by some impressive verses. At dinner, when a very numerous party had assembled, he knew that he was expected to talk, and exerted himself to meet the expectation. But he was evidently struggling with gloomy thoughts that prompted him to silence, and perhaps to solitude: he talked with effort, and passively resigned himself to the repeated misrepresentations of several amongst his hearers. The subject chiefly discussed was Arthur Young, not for his Rural Economy, but for his Politics. It must be to this period of Coleridge's life that Wordsworth refers in those exquisite 'Lines written in my pocket copy of the "Castle of Indolence."' The

passage which I mean comes after a description of Coleridge's countenance, and begins in some such terms as these:—

'A piteous sight it was to see this man,
When he came back to us, a wither'd flow'r,' &c.

Withered he was, indeed, and to all appearance blighted. At night he entered into a spontaneous explanation of this unhappy overclouding of his life, on occasion of my saying accidentally that a toothache had obliged me to take a few drops of laudanum. At what time or on what motive he had commenced the use of opium, he did not say; but the peculiar emphasis of horror with which he warned me against forming a habit of the same kind impressed upon my mind a feeling that he never hoped to liberate himself from the bondage.* My belief is that he never *did*. About ten o'clock at night I took leave of him; and, feeling that I could not easily go to sleep after the excitement of the day, and fresh from the sad spectacle of powers so majestic already besieged by decay, I determined to return to Bristol through the coolness of the night. The roads, though, in fact, a section of the great highway between seaports so turbulent as Bristol and Plymouth, were as quiet as garden-walks. Once only I passed through the expiring fires of a village fair or wake: that interruption excepted, through the whole stretch of forty miles from Bridgewater to the Hot-wells, I saw no living creature but a surly dog, who followed me for a mile along a park-wall, and a man, who was moving about in the half-way town of Cross. The turnpike-gates were all opened by a mechanical contrivance from a bed-room window; I seemed to myself in solitary possession of the whole sleeping country. The summer night was divinely calm; no sound, except once or twice the cry of a child as I was passing the windows of cottages, ever broke upon the utter silence; and all things conspired to throw back my thoughts upon that extraordinary man whom I had just quitted.

* Gillman quotes Coleridge as having written in a notebook on 7th January 1830: 'Oh, may the God to whom I look for mercy through Christ, shew mercy on the author of the "Confessions of an Opium Eater," . . . even to the author of that work I pleaded with flowing tears, and with an agony of forewarning. He utterly denied it, but I fear that I had even then to *deter* perhaps not to forewarn.'

The fine saying of Addison is familiar to most readers—that Babylon in ruins is not so affecting a spectacle, or so solemn, as a human mind overthrown by lunacy. How much more awful, then, when a mind so regal as that of Coleridge is overthrown, or threatened with overthrow, not by a visitation of Providence, but by the treachery of its own will, and by the conspiracy, as it were, of himself against himself! Was it possible that this ruin had been caused or hurried forward by the dismal degradations of pecuniary difficulties? That was worth inquiring. I will here mention briefly that I *did* inquire two days after; and, in consequence of what I heard, I contrived that a particular service should be rendered to Mr. Coleridge, a week after, through the hands of Mr. Cottle of Bristol, which might have the effect of liberating his mind from anxiety for a year or two, and thus rendering his great powers disposable to their natural uses.* That service was accepted by Coleridge. To save him any feelings of distress, all names were concealed; but, in a letter written by him about fifteen years after that time, I found that he had become aware of all the circumstances, perhaps through some indiscretion of Mr. Cottle's. A more important question I never ascertained, viz. whether this service had the effect of seriously lightening his mind. For some succeeding years, he did certainly appear to me released from that load of despondency which oppressed him on my first introduction. Grave, indeed, he continued to be, and at times absorbed in gloom; nor did I ever see him in a state of perfectly natural cheerfulness. But, as he strove in vain, for many years, to wean himself from his captivity to opium, a healthy state of

* The 'particular service' to which De Quincey modestly refers was the turning over to Coleridge, through Joseph Cottle, of £300, as an unconditional loan from an anonymous 'young man of fortune who admired his talents'. De Quincey offered £500, but the prudent Cottle urged him to try the effect of instalments. Even the £300 was a considerable part of his small fortune, and De Quincey later admitted to his mother that the act was for him immoral, as not for his means. The 'loan' was never repaid, although as his own affairs became more straitened De Quincey listed it as an asset and apparently wrote Coleridge asking for payment. The letter of which he speaks is probably that postmarked 9th August 1821 in which Coleridge expresses his abject regret at his total inability to repay. The assistance appears not to have had the salutary effect that De Quincey hoped, for Coleridge wrote Cottle (7th March 1815): 'Heaven knows of the £300 received, through you, what went to myself. No! bowed down under manifold infirmities, I yet dare to appeal to God for the truth of what I say; I have remained poor by always having been poor, and incapable of pursuing any one great work, for want of a competence beforehand.'

spirits could not be much expected. Perhaps, indeed, where the liver and other organs had, for so large a period in life, been subject to a continual morbid stimulation, it might be impossible for the system ever to recover a natural action. Torpor, I suppose, must result from continued artificial excitement; and, perhaps, upon a scale of corresponding duration. Life, in such a case, may not offer a field of sufficient extent for unthreading the fatal links that have been wound about the machinery of health, and have crippled its natural play.

Meantime—to resume the thread of my wandering narrative—on this serene summer night of 1807, as I moved slowly along, with my eyes continually settling upon the northern constellations, which, like all the fixed stars, by their immeasurable and almost spiritual remoteness from human affairs, naturally throw the thoughts upon the perishableness of our earthly troubles, in contrast with their own utter peace and solemnity—I reverted, at intervals, to all I had ever heard of Coleridge, and strove to weave it into some continuous sketch of his life. I hardly remember how much I then knew; I know but little now: that little I will here jot down upon paper.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the son of a learned clergyman—the vicar of Ottery St. Mary, in the southern quarter of Devonshire. It is painful to mention that he was almost an object of persecution to his mother; why, I could never learn. His father was described to me, by Coleridge himself, as a sort of Parson Adams, being distinguished by his erudition, his inexperience of the world, and his guileless simplicity. I once purchased in London, and, I suppose, still possess, two elementary books on the Latin language by this reverend gentleman; one of them, as I found, making somewhat higher pretensions than a common school grammar. In particular, an attempt is made to reform the theory of the cases; and it gives a pleasant specimen of the rustic scholar's *natveté*, that he seriously proposes to banish such vexatious terms as the *accusative*; and, by way of simplifying the matter to tender minds, that we should call it, in all time to come, the '*quale-quare-quidditive*' case, upon what incomprehensible principle I never could fathom. He used regularly to delight his village flock, on Sundays, with Hebrew quotations in his sermons, which he always introduced as the 'immediate language of the

Holy Ghost.' This proved unfortunate to his successor: he was also a learned man, and his parishioners admitted it, but generally with a sigh for past times, and a sorrowful complaint that he was still far below Parson Coleridge—for that *he* never gave them any 'immediate language of the Holy Ghost.' I presume that, like the reverend gentleman so pleasantly sketched in 'St. Ronan's Well,' Mr. Coleridge, who resembled that person in his oriental learning, in his absence of mind, and in his simplicity, must also have resembled him in short-sightedness, of which his son used to relate this ludicrous instance. Dining in a large party, one day, the modest divine was suddenly shocked by perceiving some part, as he conceived, of his own snowy shirt emerging from a part of his habiliments, which we will suppose to have been his waistcoat. It was *not* that; but for decorum we will so call it. The stray portion of his own supposed tunic was admonished of its errors by a forcible thrust-back into its proper home; but still another *limbus* persisted to emerge, or seemed to persist, and still another, until the learned gentleman absolutely perspired with the labour of re-establishing order. And, after all, he saw with anguish that some arrears of the snowy indecorum still remained to reduce into obedience. To this remnant of rebellion he was proceeding to apply himself—strangely confounded, however, at the obstinacy of the insurrection—when, the mistress of the house rising to lead away the ladies from the table, and all parties naturally rising with her, it became suddenly apparent to every eye that the worthy Orientalist had been most laboriously stowing away into the capacious receptacles of his own habiliments—under the delusion that it was his own shirt—the snowy folds of a lady's gown, belonging to his next neighbour; and so voluminously that a very small portion of it, indeed, remained for the lady's own use; the natural consequence of which was, of course, that the lady appeared inextricably yoked to the learned theologian, and could not in any way effect her release, until after certain operations upon the vicar's dress, and a continued refunding and rolling out of snowy mazes upon snowy mazes, in quantities which at length proved too much for the gravity of the company. Inextinguishable laughter arose from all parties, except the erring and unhappy doctor, who, in dire perplexity, continued still refunding with all his might—perspiring and refunding—until he had paid up the last arrears of his long debt, and thus put an end to a case of

distress more memorable to himself and his parishioners than any 'quale-quare-quidditive' case that probably had ever perplexed his learning.

In his childish days, and when he had become an orphan, Coleridge was removed to the heart of London, and placed on the great foundation of Christ's Hospital. He there found himself associated, as a school-fellow, with several boys destined to distinction in after life; particularly the brilliant Leigh Hunt, and more closely with one who, if not endowed with powers equally large and comprehensive as his own, had, however, genius not less original or exquisite—viz. the inimitable Charles Lamb. But, in learning, Coleridge outstripped all competitors, and rose to be the captain of the school. It is, indeed, a memorable fact to be recorded of a boy, that, before completing his fifteenth year, he had translated the Greek Hymns of Synesius into English Anacreontic verse. This was not a school task, but a labour of love and choice. Before leaving school, Coleridge had an opportunity of reading the sonnets of Bowles, which so powerfully impressed his poetic sensibility that he made forty transcripts of them with his own pen, by way of presents to his youthful friends. From Christ's Hospital, by the privilege of his station at school, he was transferred to Jesus College, Cambridge. It was here, no doubt, that his acquaintance began with the philosophic system of Hartley, for that eminent person had been a Jesus man. Friend also, the mathematician, of heretical memory (he was judiciously tried, and expelled from his fellowship, on some issue connected with the doctrine of the Trinity), belonged to that college, and was probably contemporary with Coleridge. What accident, or imprudence, carried him away from Cambridge before he had completed the usual period of study, I never heard. He had certainly won some distinction as a scholar, having obtained the prize for a Greek ode in Sapphic metre, of which the sentiments (as he observes himself) were better than the Greek. Porson was accustomed, meanly enough, to ridicule the Greek *lexis* of this ode; which was to break a fly upon the wheel. The ode was clever enough for a boy; but to such skill in Greek as could have enabled him to compose with critical accuracy Coleridge never made pretensions.

The incidents of Coleridge's life about this period, and some account of a heavy disappointment in love, which probably it was

that carried him away from Cambridge, are to be found embodied (with what modifications I know not) in the novel of 'Edmund Oliver,' written by Charles Lloyd. It is well known that, in a frenzy of unhappy feeling at the rejection he met with from the lady of his choice, Coleridge enlisted as a private into a dragoon regiment. He fell off his horse on several occasions, but perhaps not more than raw recruits are apt to do when first put under the riding-master. But Coleridge was naturally ill-framed for a good horseman. He is also represented in 'Edmund Oliver' as having found peculiar difficulty or annoyance in grooming his horse. But the most romantic incident in that scene of his life was in the circumstances of his discharge. It is said (but I vouch for no part of the story) that Coleridge, as a private, mounted guard at the door of a room in which his officers were giving a ball. Two of them had a dispute upon some Greek word or passage when close to Coleridge's station. He interposed his authentic decision of the case. The officers stared as though one of their own horses had sung 'Rule Britannia'; questioned him; heard his story; pitied his misfortune; and finally subscribed to purchase his discharge. So the story has been told; and also otherwise. Not very long after this, Coleridge became acquainted with the two celebrated Wedgwoods of Etruria, both of whom, admiring his fine powers, subscribed to send him into North Germany, where, at the University of Göttingen, he completed his education according to his own scheme. The most celebrated professor whose lectures he attended was the far-famed Blumenbach, of whom he continued to speak through life with almost filial reverence. Returning to England, he attended Mr. Thomas Wedgwood, as a friend, throughout the afflicting and anomalous illness which brought him to the grave. It was supposed by medical men that the cause of Mr. Wedgwood's continued misery was a stricture of the colon. The external symptoms were torpor and morbid irritability, together with everlasting restlessness. By way of some relief to this latter symptom, Mr. Wedgwood purchased a travelling carriage, and wandered up and down England, taking Coleridge as his companion. And, as a desperate attempt to rouse and irritate the decaying sensibility of his system, I have been assured, by a surviving friend, that Mr. Wedgwood at one time opened a butcher's shop, conceiving that the affronts and disputes to which such a situation would expose him might act beneficially upon his

increasing torpor. This strange expedient ¹ served only to express the anguish which had now mastered his nature; it was soon abandoned; and this accomplished but miserable man at length sank under his sufferings. What made the case more memorable was the combination of worldly prosperity which forced into strong relief and fiery contrast this curse written in the flesh. He was rich, he was young, he was popular, distinguished for his scientific attainments, publicly honoured for patriotic services, and had before him, when he first fell ill, every prospect of a career even nationally splendid.

By the death of Mr. Wedgwood, Coleridge succeeded to a regular annuity of £75, which that gentleman had bequeathed to him. The other Mr. Wedgwood granted him an equal allowance. Now came his marriage, his connection with politics and political journals, his residence in various parts of Somersetshire, and his consequent introduction to Mr. Wordsworth. In his politics, Mr. Coleridge was most sincere and most enthusiastic. No man hailed with profounder sympathy the French Revolution; and, though he saw cause to withdraw his regard from many of the democratic zealots in this country, and even from the revolutionary interest as it was subsequently conducted, he continued to worship the original revolutionary cause in a pure Miltonic spirit; and he continued also to abominate the policy of Mr. Pitt in a degree which I myself find it difficult to understand. The very spirited little poem of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter,' who are supposed to meet in conference, to describe their horrid triumphs, and then to ask in a whisper *who* it was that unchained them,—to which each in turn replies,

‘Letters four do form his name!’

expresses his horror of Mr. Pitt personally in a most extravagant shape, but merely for the purpose of poetic effect; for he had no real unkindness in his heart towards any human being; and I have often heard him disclaim the hatred which is here expressed for

¹ Which, however, his brother denied as a pure fable. On reading this account, he wrote to me, and in very courteous terms assured me that I had been misinformed. I now retain the story simply as a version, partially erroneous, no doubt, of perhaps some true anecdote that may have escaped the surviving Mr. Wedgwood's knowledge; my reason for thinking thus being that the same anecdote essentially, but varied in the circumstances, has reached me at different periods from parties having no connection whatsoever. [Q.]

Mr. Pitt, as he did also very elaborately and earnestly in print. Somewhere about this time, Coleridge attempted, under Sheridan's countenance, to bring a tragedy upon the stage of Drury Lane; but his prospect of success, as I once heard or read, was suddenly marred by Mr. Sheridan's inability to sacrifice what he thought a good jest. One scene presented a cave with streams of water weeping down the sides; and the first words were, in a sort of mimicry of the sound, 'Drip, drip, drip!' Upon which Sheridan repeated aloud to the assembled green-room, expressly convoked for the purpose of hearing the play read, 'Drip, drip, drip!—why, God bless me, there's nothing here but *dripping*!' and so arose a chorus of laughter amongst the actors fatal for the moment to the probationary play.*

About the latter end of the century, Coleridge visited North Germany again, in company with Mr. and Miss Wordsworth. Their tour was chiefly confined to the Hartz Forest and its neighbourhood. But the incident most worthy of remembrance in their excursion was a visit made to Klopstock; either at Hamburgh, or, perhaps, at the Danish town of Altona, on the same river Elbe; for Klopstock was a pensioner of the Danish king. An anonymous writer, who attacked Coleridge most truculently in an early number of 'Blackwood,' and with an *acharnement* that must astonish the neutral reader, has made the mistake of supposing Coleridge to have been the chief speaker, who did not speak at all.† The case was this: Klopstock could not speak English, though everybody remembers the pretty broken English¹ of his second wife. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth, on the other hand, was able to *speak* German with any fluency. French, therefore, was the only medium of free communication; that being

¹ Published in Richardson's Correspondence. [Q.]

* This tragedy was *Osorio*, which was rejected by Sheridan in 1797 as too obscure. Coleridge was much aggrieved by Sheridan's criticism of the dripping passage. De Quincey may have seen his complaints in the preface to the printed version of the revised play which, under the title of *Remorse*, achieved success at Drury Lane in 1813.

† Coleridge was in Germany, for the first time, from September 1798 to June 1799. He soon separated from the Wordsworths, who settled down at Goslar, to go on to Ratzeburg and Göttingen. Coleridge gives a somewhat more active picture of his part in this interview with Klopstock in *Satyrane's Letters*, published originally in *The Friend* and after 1817 in *Biographia Literaria*. The *Blackwood's* article to which De Quincey refers here and on page 46 was a review of the *Biographia Literaria* in the October 1817 number.

pretty equally familiar to Wordsworth and to Klopstock. But Coleridge found so much difficulty even in *reading* French that, wherever (as in the case of Leibnitz's 'Theodicée') there was a choice between an original written in French and a translation, though it might be a very faulty one, in German, he always preferred the latter. Hence it happened that Wordsworth, on behalf of the English party, was the sole supporter of the dialogue. The anonymous critic says another thing, which certainly has an air of truth—viz. that Klopstock plays a very secondary rôle in the interview (or words to that effect). But how was this to be avoided in reporting the case, supposing the fact to have been such? Now, the plain truth is that Wordsworth, upon his own ground, was an incomparable talker; whereas 'Klubstick' (as Coleridge used to call him) was always a feeble and slovenly one, because a loose and incoherent thinker. Besides, he was now old and decaying. Nor at any time, nor in any accomplishment, could Klopstock have shone, unless in the respectable art of skating. *There* he had a real advantage. The author of 'The Messiah,' I have authority for saying, skated with the ease and grace of a regular artist; whereas the poet of the 'Excursion' sprawled upon the ice like a cow dancing a cotillon. Wordsworth did the very opposite of that with which he was taxed; for, happening to look down at Klopstock's swollen legs, and recollecting his age, he felt touched by a sort of filial pity for his helplessness. And * he came to the conclusion that it would not seem becoming in a young and as yet obscure author to report too consciously the real superiority which he found it easy to maintain in such a colloquy.

But neither had Klopstock the pretensions as a poet which the Blackwood writer seems to take for granted. Germany, the truth is, wanted a great epic poet. Not having produced one in that early and plastic stage of her literary soil when such a growth is natural and spontaneous, the next thing was to bespeak a substitute. The force of Coleridge's well-known repartee, when, in reply to a foreigner asserting for Klopstock the rank of German Milton, he said, 'True, sir; a very *German* Milton,' cannot be fully appreciated but by one who is familiar with the German poetry, and the

* *Tait's* interpolates: 'Upon another principle, which, in my judgment, Wordsworth is disposed to carry too far, viz., the forbearance, and the ceremonious caution which he habitually concedes to an established reputation, even where he believes it to have been built on a hollow foundation.'

small proportion in which it is a natural, racy, and domestic growth. It has been often noticed as the misfortune of the Roman literature that it grew up too much under the oppression of Grecian models, and of Grecian models depraved by Alexandrian art—a fact, so far as it *was* a fact, which tended to cripple the *genial* and characteristic spirit of the national mind. But this evil, after all, did not take effect except in a partial sense. Rome had cast much of her literature in her own moulds before these exotic models had begun to domineer. In fact, the reproach is in a very narrow sense true. Not so with Germany. Her literature, since its revival in the last century (and the revival upon the impulse of what cattle!—Bodmer on the one hand, and Gottsched, the never-enough-to-be-despised Gottsched, on the other!), has hardly moved a step in the freedom of natural grace. England for nineteen, and France for the twentieth, of all her capital works, has given the too servile law: and, with regard to Klopstock, if ever there was a good exemplification of the spurious and the counterfeit in literature, seek it in ‘The Messiah.’ He is verily and indeed the *Birmingham* Milton. This Klopstockian dialogue, by the way, was first printed (hardly *published*) in the original, or Lake edition of ‘The Friend.’ In the recast of that work it was omitted; nor has it been printed anywhere else that I am aware of.

About the close of the first revolutionary war it must have been, or in the brief interval of peace, that Coleridge resorted to the English Lakes as a place of residence. Wordsworth had a natural connection with that region, by birth, breeding, and family alliances. Wordsworth must have attracted Coleridge to the Lakes; and Coleridge, through his affinity to Southey, eventually attracted *him*. Southey, as is known to all who take an interest in the Lake colony, married a sister of Mrs. Coleridge’s; and, as a singular eccentricity in the circumstances of that marriage, I may mention that, on his wedding-day, and from the very portico of the church, Southey left his bride to embark for Lisbon. His uncle, Dr. Herbert, was chaplain to the English factory in that city; and it was to benefit by the facilities in that way opened to him for seeing Portugal that Southey now went abroad.* He extended his

* In 1800 Coleridge settled at Greta Hall, Keswick, a large house which he later shared with Southey, who ultimately took it over. Southey and Edith Fricker were married secretly and indeed parted at the church door, but did meet again the following day before he set off for Portugal and Spain with his uncle, the Rev. Herbert Hill.

tour to Spain; and the result of his notices was communicated to the world in a volume of travels. By such accidents of personal or family connection as I have mentioned was the Lake colony gathered; and the critics of the day, unaware of the real facts, supposed them to have assembled under common views in literature—particularly with regard to the true functions of poetry, and the true theory of poetic diction. Under this original blunder, laughable it is to mention that they went on to *find* in their writings all the agreements and common characteristics which their blunder had presumed; and they incorporated the whole community under the name of the *Lake School*. Yet Wordsworth and Southey never had one principle in common; their hostility was even flagrant. Indeed, Southey troubled himself little about abstract principles in anything; and, so far from agreeing with Wordsworth to the extent of setting up a separate school in poetry, he told me himself (August 1812) that he highly disapproved both of Mr. Wordsworth's theories and of his practice. It is very true that one man may sympathize with another, or even follow his leading, unconscious that he does so; or he may go so far as, in the very act of virtual imitation, to deem himself in opposition; but this sort of blind agreement could hardly be supposed of two men so discerning and so self-examining as Wordsworth and Southey. And, in fact, a philosophic investigation of the difficult questions connected with this whole slang about schools, Lake schools, etc., would show that Southey has not, nor ever had, any *peculiarities* in common with Wordsworth, beyond that of exchanging the old prescriptive diction of poetry, introduced between the periods of Milton and Cowper, for the simpler and profounder forms of daily life in some instances, and of the Bible in others. The bold and uniform practice of Wordsworth was here adopted, on perfectly independent views, by Southey. In this respect, however, Cowper had already begun the reform; and his influence, concurring with the now larger influence of Wordsworth, has operated so extensively as to make their own original differences at this day less perceptible.

By the way, the word *colony* reminds me that I have omitted to mention in its proper place some scheme for migrating to America which had been entertained by Coleridge and Southey about the year 1794-95, under the learned name of *Pantisocracy*. So far as I ever heard, it differed little, except in its Grecian name,

from any other scheme for mitigating the privations of a wilderness by settling in a cluster of families, bound together by congenial tastes and uniform principles, rather than in self-depending, insulated households. Steadily pursued, it might, after all, have been a fortunate plan for Coleridge. 'Soliciting my food from daily toil,' a line in which Coleridge alludes to the scheme, implies a condition of life that would have upheld Coleridge's health and happiness somewhat better than the habits of luxurious city life as now constituted in Europe. But, returning to the Lakes, and to the Lake colony of poets: So little were Southey and Wordsworth connected by any personal intercourse in those days, and so little disposed to be connected, that, whilst the latter had a cottage in Grasmere, Southey pitched his tent at Greta Hall, on a little eminence rising immediately from the river Greta and the town of Keswick. Grasmere is in Westmoreland; Keswick in Cumberland; and they are thirteen good miles apart. Coleridge and his family were domiciliated in Greta Hall; sharing that house, a tolerably large one, on some principle of amicable division, with Mr. Southey. But Coleridge personally was more often to be found at Grasmere—which presented the threefold attractions of loveliness so complete as to eclipse even the scenery of Derwentwater; a pastoral state of society, free from the deformities of a little town like Keswick; and, finally, for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the society of Wordsworth. Not before 1815 or 1816 could it be said that Southey and Wordsworth were even upon friendly terms; so entirely is it untrue that they combined to frame a school of poetry. Up to that time, they viewed each other with mutual respect, but also with mutual dislike; almost, I might say, with mutual disgust. Wordsworth disliked in Southey the want of depth, or the apparent want, as regards the power of philosophic abstraction.* Southey disliked in Wordsworth the air of dogmatism, and the unaffable haughtiness of his manner. Other more trivial reasons combined with these.

At this time, when Coleridge first settled at the Lakes, or not long after, a romantic and somewhat tragical affair drew the eyes of all England, and, for many years, continued to draw the steps of tourists, to one of the most secluded Cumberland valleys, so little visited previously that it might be described almost as an

* *Tait's* reads: 'Want of depth, as regards the power of philosophic abstraction, of comprehensive views, and of severe principles of thought.'

undiscovered chamber of that romantic district. Coleridge was brought into a closer connection with this affair than merely by the general relation of neighbourhood; for an article of his in a morning paper, I believe, unintentionally furnished the original clue for unmasking the base impostor who figured as the central actor in this tale. The tale was at that time dramatized, and scenically represented by some of the minor theatres in London, as noticed by Wordsworth in the 'Prelude.' But other generations have arisen since that time, who must naturally be unacquainted with the circumstances; and on their account I will here recall them:—One day in the Lake season there drove up to the Royal Oak, the principal inn at Keswick, a handsome and well-appointed travelling carriage, containing one gentleman of somewhat dashing exterior. The stranger was a picturesque-hunter, but not of that order who fly round the ordinary tour with the velocity of lovers posting to Gretna, or of criminals running from the police; his purpose was to domiciliate himself in this beautiful scenery, and to see it at his leisure. From Keswick, as his headquarters, he made excursions in every direction amongst the neighbouring valleys; meeting generally a good deal of respect and attention, partly on account of his handsome equipage, and still more from his visiting-cards, which designated him as 'The Hon. Augustus Hope.' Under this name, he gave himself out for a brother of Lord Hopetoun's. Some persons had discernment enough to doubt of this; for the man's breeding and deportment, though showy, had an under-tone of vulgarity about it; and Coleridge assured me that he was grossly ungrammatical in his ordinary conversation. However, one fact, soon dispersed by the people of a little rustic post-office, laid asleep all demurs; he not only received letters addressed to him under this assumed name—that might be through collusion with accomplices—but he himself continually *franked* letters by that name. Now, this being a capital offence, being not only a forgery, but (as a forgery on the Post-Office) sure to be prosecuted, nobody presumed to question his pretensions any longer; and, henceforward, he went to all places with the consideration attached to an earl's brother. All doors flew open at his approach; boats, boatmen, nets, and the most unlimited sporting privileges, were placed at the disposal of the 'Honourable' gentleman: and the hospitality of the district was put on its mettle, in offering a suitable reception to

the patrician Scotsman. It could be no blame to a shepherd girl, bred in the sternest solitude which England has to show, that she should fall into a snare which many of her betters had not escaped. Nine miles from Keswick, by the nearest bridle-road through Newlands, but fourteen or fifteen by any route which the honourable gentleman's travelling-carriage could traverse, lies the Lake of Buttermere. Its margin, which is overhung by some of the loftiest and steepest of the Cumbrian mountains, exhibits on either side few traces of human neighbourhood; the level area, where the hills recede enough to allow of any, is of a wild pastoral character, or almost savage; the waters of the lake are deep and sullen; and the barrier mountains, by excluding the sun for much of his daily course, strengthen the gloomy impressions. At the foot of this lake (that is, at the end where its waters issue) lie a few unornamented fields, through which rolls a little brook-like river, connecting it with the larger lake of Crummock; and at the edge of this miniature domain, upon the roadside, stands a cluster of cottages, so small and few that in the richer tracts of England they would scarcely be complimented with the name of hamlet. One of these, and I believe the principal, belonged to an independent proprietor, called, in the local dialect, a 'Statesman'¹; and more, perhaps, for the sake of attracting a little society than with much view to pecuniary profit at that era, this cottage offered the accommodations of an inn to the traveller and his horse. Rare, however, must have been the mounted traveller in those days, unless visiting Buttermere for itself, and as a *terminus ad quem*; since the road led to no further habitations of man, with the exception of some four or five pastoral cabins, equally humble, in Gatesgarthdale.

Hither, however, in an evil hour for the peace of this little brotherhood of shepherds, came the cruel spoiler from Keswick. His errand was, to witness or to share in the char-fishing; for in Derwentwater (the Lake of Keswick) no char is found, which breeds only in the deep waters, such as Windermere, Crummock, Buttermere, and Coniston—never in the shallow ones. But, whatever had been his first object, *that* was speedily forgotten in one more deeply interesting. The daughter of the house, a fine young

¹ *i.e.*—A 'Statesman' elliptically for an Estatesman,—a native dalesman possessing and personally cultivating a patrimonial landed estate. [Q.]

woman of eighteen, acted as waiter.¹ In a situation so solitary, the stranger had unlimited facilities for enjoying her company, and recommending himself to her favour. Doubts about his pretensions never arose in so simple a place as this; they were overruled before they could well have arisen by the opinion now general in Keswick, that he really was what he pretended to be: and thus, with little demur, except in the shape of a few natural words of parting anger from a defeated or rejected rustic admirer, the young woman gave her hand in marriage to the showy and unprincipled stranger. I know not whether the marriage was, or could have been, celebrated in the little mountain chapel of Buttermere. If it were, I persuade myself that the most hardened villain must have felt a momentary pang on violating the altar of such a chapel; so touchingly does it express, by its miniature dimensions, the almost helpless humility of that little pastoral community to whose spiritual wants it has from generation to generation administered. It is not only the very smallest chapel by many degrees in all England, but is so mere a toy in outward appearance that, were it not for its antiquity, its wild mountain exposure, and its consecrated connection with the final hopes and fears of the adjacent pastoral hamlet—but for these considerations, the first movement of a stranger's feelings would be towards loud laughter; for the little chapel looks not so much a mimic chapel in a drop-scene from the Opera House as a miniature copy from such a scene; and evidently could not receive within its walls more than half-a-dozen of households. From this sanctuary it was—from beneath the maternal shadow, if not from the very altar,² of this lonely chapel—that the heartless villain carried off the flower of the mountains. Between this place and Keswick they continued to move backwards and forwards, until at length, with the startling of a thunder-clap to the affrighted mountaineers, the bubble burst: officers of justice appeared: the stranger was

¹ 'Waiter'.—Since this was first written, social changes in London, by introducing females very extensively into the office (once monopolized by men) of attending the visitors at the tables of eating-houses, have introduced a corresponding new word—viz., *waitress*; which word, twenty-five years back, would have been simply ludicrous; but now is become as indispensable to precision of language as the words *traitress*, *heirress*, *inheritrix*, &c. [Q.]

² My doubt is founded upon the varying tenure of these secluded chapels as to privileges of marrying or burying. The mere name of chapel, though, of course, in regular connection with some mother church, does not of itself imply whether it has or has not the power to solemnize a marriage. [Q.]

easily intercepted from flight, and, upon a capital charge, was borne away to Carlisle. At the ensuing assizes he was tried for forgery on the prosecution of the Post-Office, found guilty, left for execution, and executed accordingly. On the day of his condemnation, Wordsworth and Coleridge passed through Carlisle, and endeavoured to obtain an interview with him. Wordsworth succeeded; but, for some unknown reason, the prisoner steadily refused to see Coleridge; a caprice which could not be penetrated. It is true that he had, during his whole residence at Keswick, avoided Coleridge with a solicitude which had revived the original suspicions against him in some quarters, after they had generally gone to sleep. But for this his motive had then been sufficient: he was of a Devonshire family, and naturally feared the eye, or the inquisitive examination of one who bore a name immemorably associated with the southern part of that county.

Coleridge, however, had been transplanted so immaturally from his native region that few people in England knew less of its family connections. That, perhaps, was unknown to this malefactor; but, at any rate, he knew that all motive was now at an end for disguise of any sort; so that his reserve, in this particular, had now become unintelligible. However, if not him, Coleridge saw and examined his very interesting papers. These were chiefly letters from women whom he had injured, pretty much in the same way, and by the same impostures, as he had so recently practised in Cumberland; and, as Coleridge assured me, were in part the most agonizing appeals that he had ever read to human justice and pity. The man's real name was, I think, Hatfield. And amongst the papers were two separate correspondences, of some length, with two young women, apparently of superior condition in life (one the daughter of an English clergyman), whom this villain had deluded by marriage, and, after some cohabitation, abandoned,—one of them with a family of young children. Great was the emotion of Coleridge when he recurred to his remembrance of these letters, and bitter, almost vindictive, was the indignation with which he spoke of Hatfield. One set of letters appeared to have been written under too certain a knowledge of *his* villainy to whom they were addressed; though still relying on some possible remains of humanity, or perhaps (the poor writer might think) on some lingering preference for herself. The other set was even more distressing; they were written under

the first conflicts of suspicions, alternately repelling with warmth the gloomy doubts which were fast arising, and then yielding to their afflicting evidence; raving in one page under the misery of alarm, in another courting the delusions of hope, and luring back the perfidious deserter,—here resigning herself to despair, and there again labouring to show that all might yet be well. Coleridge said often, in looking back upon that frightful exposure of human guilt and misery, that the man who, when pursued by these heartrending apostrophes, and with this litany of anguish sounding in his ears, from despairing women and from famishing children, could yet find it possible to enjoy the calm pleasures of a Lake tourist, and deliberately to hunt for the picturesque, must have been a fiend of that order which fortunately does not often emerge amongst men. It is painful to remember that, in those days, amongst the multitudes who ended their career in the same ignominious way, and the majority for offences connected with the forgery of bank notes, there must have been a considerable number who perished from the very opposite cause—viz., because they felt, too passionately and profoundly for prudence, the claims of those who looked up to them for support. One common scaffold confounds the most flinty hearts and the tenderest. However, in this instance, it was in some measure the heartless part of Hatfield's conduct which drew upon him his ruin: for the Cumberland jury honestly declared their unwillingness to hang him for having forged a frank; and both they, and those who refused to aid his escape when first apprehended, were reconciled to this harshness entirely by what they heard of his conduct to their injured young fellow-countrywoman.

She, meantime, under the name of *The Beauty of Buttermere*, became an object of interest to all England; melodramas were produced in the London suburban¹ theatres upon her story; and, for many a year afterwards, shoals of tourists crowded to the

¹ In connection with this mention of 'suburban' and minor theatres, it is but fair to cite a passage expressly relating to Mary of Buttermere from the Seventh Book (entitled 'Residence in London') of Wordsworth's 'Prelude':—

'Here, too, were forms and pressures of the time,
Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy display'd
When Art was young; dramas of living men,
And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,
Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
Divulged by Truth, and magnified by Fame;

secluded lake, and the little homely cabaret, which had been the scene of her brief romance. It was fortunate for a person in her distressing situation that her home was not in a town: the few and simple neighbours, who had witnessed her imaginary elevation, having little knowledge of worldly feelings, never for an instant connected with her disappointment any sense of the ludicrous, or spoke of it as a calamity to which her vanity might have co-operated. They treated it as unmixed injury, reflecting shame upon nobody but the wicked perpetrator. Hence, without much trial to her womanly sensibilities, she found herself able to resume her situation in the little inn; and this she continued to hold for many years. In that place, and that capacity, I saw her repeatedly, and shall here say a word upon her personal appearance, because the Lake poets all admired her greatly. Her figure was, in my eyes, good; but I doubt whether most of my readers would have thought it such. She was none of your evanescent, wasp-waisted beauties; on the contrary, she was rather large every way; tallish,

Such as the daring brotherhood of late
 Set forth, too serious theme for that light place—
 I mean, O distant friend! a story drawn
 From our own ground—the Maid of Buttermere,
 And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife,
 Deserted and deceived, the spoiler came
 And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds. These bonds to thee
 Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
 Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,
 Beheld her serving at the cottage inn,
 Both stricken, as she enter'd or withdrew,
 With admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, mark'd by unexampled grace.
 We since that time not unfamiliarly
 Have seen her—her discretion have observed,
 Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
 Her patience and humility of mind,
 Unspoiled by commendation and the excess
 Of public notice—an offensive light
 To a meek spirit suffering inwardly.'

The 'distant friend' here apostrophized is Coleridge, then at Malta. But it is fair to record this memorial of the fair mountaineer—going perhaps as much beyond the public estimate of her pretensions as my own was below it. It should be added that William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (to whom the writer appeals as in general sympathy with himself) had seen Mary more frequently, and had conversed with her much more freely, than myself. [Q.]

and proportionably broad. Her face was fair, and her features feminine; and, unquestionably, she was what all the world would have agreed to call 'good-looking.' But, except in her arms, which had something of a statuesque beauty, and in her carriage, which expressed a womanly grace, together with some degree of dignity and self-possession, I confess that I looked in vain for any *positive* qualities of any sort or degree. *Beautiful*, in any emphatic sense, she was not. Everything about her face and bust was negative; simply without offence. Even this, however, was more than could be said at all times; for the expression of her countenance *could* be disagreeable. This arose out of her situation; connected as it was with defective sensibility and a misdirected pride. Nothing operates so differently upon different minds and different styles of beauty as the inquisitive gaze of strangers, whether in the spirit of respectful admiration or of insolence. Some I have seen upon whose angelic beauty this sort of confusion settled advantageously, and like a softening veil; others, in whom it meets with proud resentment, are sometimes disfigured by it. In Mary of Buttermere it roused mere anger and disdain; which, meeting with the sense of her humble and dependent situation, gave birth to a most unhappy aspect of countenance. Men who had no touch of a gentleman's nature in their composition sometimes insulted her by looks and by words, supposing that they purchased the right to do this by an extra half-crown; and she too readily attributed the same spirit of impertinent curiosity to every man whose eyes happened to settle steadily upon her face. Yet, once at least, I must have seen her under the most favourable circumstances: for, on my first visit to Buttermere, I had the pleasure of Mr. Southey's company, who was incapable of wounding anybody's feelings, and to Mary, in particular, was well known by kind attentions, and I believe by some services. Then, at least, I saw her to advantage, and perhaps, for a figure of her build, at the best age; for it was about nine or ten years after her misfortune, when she might be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. We were alone, a solitary pair of tourists: nothing arose to confuse or distress her. She waited upon us at dinner, and talked to us freely. 'This is a respectable young woman,' I said to myself; but nothing of that enthusiasm could I feel which beauty, such as I *have* beheld at the Lakes, would have been apt to raise under a similar misfortune. One lady, not very scrupulous in her embellishment

of facts, used to tell an anecdote of her which I hope was exaggerated. Some friend of hers (as she affirmed), in company with a large party, visited Buttermere within one day after that upon which Hatfield suffered; and she protested that Mary threw upon the table, with an emphatic gesture, the Carlisle paper containing an elaborate account of his execution.

It is an instance of Coleridge's carelessness that he, who had as little of fixed ill-nature in his temper as any person whom I have ever known, managed, in reporting this story at the time of its occurrence, to get himself hooked into a personal quarrel, which hung over his head unsettled for nine or ten years. A Liverpool merchant, who was then meditating a house in the Vale of Grasmere, and perhaps might have incurred Coleridge's anger by thus disturbing, with inappropriate intrusions, this loveliest of all English landscapes, had connected himself a good deal with Hatfield during his Keswick masquerade; and was said even to have carried his regard to that villain so far as to have christened one of his own children by the names of 'Augustus Hope.' With these and other circumstances, expressing the extent of the infatuation amongst the swindler's dupes, Coleridge made the public merry. Naturally, the Liverpool merchant was not amongst those who admired the facetiousness of Coleridge on this occasion, but swore vengeance whenever they should meet. They never *did* meet, until ten years had gone by; and then, oddly enough, it was in the Liverpool man's own house—in that very nuisance of a house which had, I suppose, first armed Coleridge's wrath against him. This house, by time and accident, in no very wonderful way, had passed into the hands of Wordsworth as tenant. Coleridge, as was still less wonderful, had become the visitor of Wordsworth on returning from Malta; and the Liverpool merchant, as was also natural, either seeking his rent, or on the general errand of a friendly visit, calling upon Wordsworth, met Coleridge in the hall. Now came the hour for settling old accounts. I was present, and can report the case. Both looked grave, and coloured a little. But ten years work wonders: an armistice of that duration heals many a wound; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, requesting his enemy's company in the garden, entered upon a long metaphysical dissertation, bordering upon what you might call *philosophical rigmarole*, and rather puzzling to answer. It seemed to be an expansion, by Thomas Aquinas, of that parody

upon a well-known passage in Shenstone, where the writer says—

‘He kick’d me down-stairs with such a sweet grace
That I thought he was handing me up.’

And, in the upshot, this conclusion *eventuated* (to speak Yankee-ishly), that purely on principles of good neighbourhood and universal philanthropy could Coleridge have meditated or executed the insult offered in the ‘Morning Post.’ The Liverpool merchant rubbed his forehead, and seemed a little perplexed; but he was a most good-natured man; and he was eminently a gentleman. At length, considering, perhaps, how very like Duns Scotus, or Albertus Magnus, Coleridge had shown himself in this luminous explanation, he might begin to reflect that, had any one of those distinguished men offered a similar affront, it would have been impossible to resent it; for who could think of kicking the ‘Doctor Seraphicus,’ or would it tell to any man’s advantage in history that he had caned Thomas Aquinas? On these principles, therefore, without saying one word, Liverpoliensis held out his hand, and a lasting reconciliation followed.

Not very long, I believe, after this affair of Hatfield, Coleridge went to Malta. His inducement to such a step must have been merely a desire to see the most interesting regions of the Mediterranean under the shelter and advantageous introduction of an official station. It was, however, an unfortunate chapter of his life: for, being necessarily thrown a good deal upon his own resources in the narrow society of a garrison, he there confirmed and cherished, if he did not there form, his habit of taking opium in large quantities. I am the last person in the world to press conclusions harshly or uncandidly against Coleridge; but I believe it to be notorious that he first began the use of opium, not as a relief from any bodily pains or nervous irritations (since his constitution was strong and excellent), but as a source of luxurious sensations. It is a great misfortune, at least it is a great peril, to have tasted the enchanted cup of youthful rapture incident to the poetic temperament. That fountain of high-wrought sensibility once unlocked experimentally, it is rare to see a submission afterwards to the insipidities of daily life. Coleridge, to speak in the words of Cervantes, wanted better bread than was made of wheat; and, when youthful blood no longer sustained the riot of

his animal spirits, he endeavoured to excite them by artificial stimulants.*

At Malta he became acquainted with Commodore Decatur and other Americans of distinction; and this brought him afterwards into connection with Allston, the American artist. Of Sir Alexander Ball, one of Lord Nelson's captains in the battle of the Nile, and Governor of Malta, he spoke and wrote uniformly in a lavish style of panegyric, for which plainer men found it difficult to see the slightest ground. It was, indeed, Coleridge's infirmity to project his own mind, and his own very peculiar ideas, nay, even his own expressions and illustrative metaphors, upon other men, and to contemplate these reflex images from himself as so many characters having an absolute ground in some separate object. 'Ball and Bell'—'Bell and Ball,'¹ were two of these pet

¹ 'Ball and Bell'—'Bell and Ball':—viz. Sir Alexander Ball, Governor of Malta, and Dr. Andrew Bell, the importer into England from Madras of that machinery for facilitating popular education which was afterwards fraudulently appropriated by Joseph Lancaster. The Bishop of Durham (Shute Barrington) gave to Dr. Bell, in reward of his Madras services, the princely Mastership of Sherborne Hospital. The doctor saved in this post £125,000, and with this money founded Trinity College, Glenalmond, in Perthshire. Most men have their enemies and calumniators: Dr. Bell had *his*, who happened rather indecorously to be his wife—From whom he was legally separated, or (as in Scotch law it is called) *divorced*; not, of course, divorced *à vinculo matrimonii* (which only amounts to a divorce in the English sense—such a divorce as enables the parties to contract another marriage), but simply divorced *à mensâ et thoro*. This legal separation, however, did not prevent the lady from persecuting the unhappy doctor with everlasting letters, indorsed outside with records of her enmity and spite. Sometimes she addressed her epistles thus:—'To that supreme of rogues, who looks the hang-dog that he is, Doctor (such a doctor!) Andrew Bell.' Or again:—'To the ape of apes, and the knave of knaves, who is recorded to

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* De Quincey's statement that Coleridge began taking opium for the 'luxurious sensations' brought a denial from Gillman, the official biographer, who quoted Coleridge: '... nor had I at any time taken the flattering poison as a stimulus, or for any craving after pleasurable sensations. I needed none; and oh! with what unutterable sorrow did I read the "Confessions of an Opium-eater," in which the writer with morbid vanity, makes a boast of what was my misfortune, for he had been faithfully and with an agony of zeal warned of the gulf, and yet wilfully struck into the current!' (p. 245). And De Quincey in his turn repulsed the implication that he himself began the use of opium for the sensual experience in his essay 'Coleridge and Opium Eating' (*Blackwood's*, January 1845). Despite Coleridge's assertions, it was probably 'notorious' that he used opium indulgently. Joseph Cottle thought so, and Southey wrote: 'Every person who has witnessed his habits, knows that for the greater, infinitely the greater part, inclination and indulgence are its motives' (April 1814).

subjects; he had a 'craze' about each of them; and to each he ascribed thoughts and words to which, had they been put upon the rack, they never would have confessed.

From Malta, on his return homewards, he went to Rome and Naples. One of the cardinals, he tells us, warned him, by the Pope's wish, of some plot, set on foot by Buonaparte, for seizing him as an anti-Gallican writer. This statement was ridiculed by the anonymous assailant in 'Blackwood' as the very consummation of moonstruck vanity; and it is there compared to John Dennis's frenzy in retreating from the sea-coast, under the belief that Louis XIV. had commissioned emissaries to land on the English shore and make a dash at his person. But, after all, the thing is not so entirely improbable. For it is certain that some orator of the Opposition (Charles Fox, as Coleridge asserts) had pointed out all the principal writers in the 'Morning Post' to Napoleon's vengeance, by describing the war as a war 'of that journal's creation.' And, as to the insinuation that Napoleon was above throwing his regards upon a simple writer of political essays, *that* is not only abundantly confuted by many scores of established cases, but also is specially put down by a case circumstantially recorded in the Second Tour to Paris by the celebrated John Scott of Aberdeen. It there appears that, on no other ground whatever than that of his connection with the London newspaper

have once paid a debt—but a small one, you may be sure, it was that he selected for this wonderful experiment—in fact it was 4½*d.* Had it been on the other side of 6*d.*, he must have died before he could have achieved so dreadful a sacrifice.' Many others, most ingeniously varied in the style of abuse, I have heard rehearsed by Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd, etc.; and one, in particular, addressed to the doctor, when spending a summer at the cottage of Robert Newton, an old soldier, in Grasmere, presented on the back two separate adjurations: one specially addressed to Robert himself, pathetically urging him to look sharply after the rent of his lodgings; and the other more generally addressed to the unfortunate person, as yet undisclosed to the British public (and in this case turning out to be myself) who might be incautious enough to pay the postage at Ambleside. 'Don't grant him an hour's credit,' she urged upon the person unknown, 'if I had any regard to my family.' '*Cash down!*' she wrote twice over. Why the doctor submitted to these annoyances, nobody knew. Some said it was mere indolence; but others held it to be a cunning compromise with her inexorable malice. The letters were certainly open to the 'public' eye; but meantime the 'public' was a very narrow one; the clerks in the post-office had little time for digesting such amenities of conjugal affection; and the chance bearer of the letters to the doctor would naturally solve the mystery by supposing an *extra* portion of madness in the writer, rather than an *extra* portion of knavery in the reverend receiver. [Q.]

press, some friend of Mr. Scott's had been courted most assiduously by Napoleon during the *Hundred Days*. Assuredly Coleridge deserved, beyond all other men that ever were connected with the daily press, to be regarded with distinction. Worlds of fine thinking lie buried in that vast abyss, never to be disinterred or restored to human admiration. Like the sea, it has swallowed treasures without end, that no diving-bell will bring up again. But nowhere, throughout its shoreless magazines of wealth, does there lie such a bed of pearls confounded with the rubbish and 'purgamenta' of ages, as in the political papers of Coleridge. No more *appreciable* monument could be raised to the memory of Coleridge than a republication of his essays in the 'Morning Post,' and afterwards in the 'Courier.' And here, by the way, it may be mentioned that the sagacity of Coleridge, as applied to the signs of the times, is illustrated by this fact, that distinctly and solemnly he foretold the restoration of the Bourbons, at a period when most people viewed such an event as the most romantic of visions, and not less chimerical than that 'march upon Paris' of Lord Hawkesbury's which for so many years supplied a theme of laughter to the Whigs.

Why Coleridge left Malta, is as difficult to explain upon any principles of ordinary business, as why he had ever gone thither.* The post of secretary, if it imposed any official attendance of a regular kind, or any official correspondence, must have been but poorly filled by *him*; and Sir Alexander Ball, if I have collected his character justly, was not likely to accept the gorgeous philosophy of Coleridge as an indemnification for irregular performance of his public duties. Perhaps, therefore, though on the best terms of mutual regard, mutually they might be pleased to part. Part they did, at any rate, and poor Coleridge was sea-sick the whole of his homeward (as he had been through the whole of his outward) voyage.

It was not long after this event that my own introduction to Coleridge occurred. At that time some negotiation was pending between him and the Royal Institution, which ended in their

* Coleridge was in Malta from May 1804 to September 1805; apparently he went chiefly for his health, and because of the absence of the regular official for a while served as Acting Public Secretary. He wrote an unfinished life of Sir Alexander Ball in the last numbers of *The Friend*.

engaging him to deliver a course of lectures on Poetry and the Fine Arts during the ensuing winter. For this series (twelve or sixteen, I think) he received a sum of one hundred guineas. And, considering the slightness of the pains which he bestowed upon them, he was well remunerated. I fear that they did not increase his reputation; for never did any man treat his audience with less respect, or his task with less careful attention. I was in London for part of the time, and can report the circumstances, having made a point of attending duly at the appointed hours. Coleridge was at that time living uncomfortably enough at the 'Courier' office, in the Strand. In such a situation, annoyed by the sound of feet passing his chamber-door continually to the printing-rooms of this great establishment, and with no gentle ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness, naturally enough his spirits flagged; and he took more than ordinary doses of opium. I called upon him daily, and pitied his forlorn condition. There was no bell in the room; which for many months answered the double purpose of bed-room and sitting-room. Consequently, I often saw him, picturesquely enveloped in nightcaps, surmounted by handkerchiefs indorsed upon handkerchiefs, shouting from the attics of the 'Courier' office, down three or four flights of stairs, to a certain 'Mrs. Brainbridge,' his sole attendant, whose dwelling was in the subterranean regions of the house. There did I often see the philosopher, with the most lugubrious of faces, invoking with all his might this uncouth name of 'Brainbridge,' each syllable of which he intoned with long-drawn emphasis, in order to 'overpower the hostile hubbub coming downwards from the creaking press, and the roar from the Strand, which entered at all the front windows. 'Mistress Brainbridge! I say, Mistress Brainbridge!' was the perpetual cry, until I expected to hear the Strand, and distant Fleet Street, take up the echo of 'Brainbridge!' Thus unhappily situated, he sank more than ever under the dominion of opium; so that, at two o'clock, when he should have been in attendance at the Royal Institution, he was too often unable to rise from bed. Then came dismissals of audience after audience, with pleas of illness; and on many of his lecture days I have seen all Albemarle Street closed by a 'lock' of carriages, filled with women of distinction, until the servants of the Institution or their own footmen advanced to the carriage-doors with the intelligence that Mr. Coleridge had been suddenly

taken ill. This plea, which at first had been received with expressions of concern, repeated too often, began to rouse disgust. Many in anger, and some in real uncertainty whether it would not be trouble thrown away, ceased to attend. And we that were more constant too often found reason to be disappointed with the quality of his lecture. His appearance was generally that of a person struggling with pain and overmastering illness. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in colour; and, in spite of the water which he continued drinking through the whole course of his lecture, he often seemed to labour under an almost paralytic inability to raise the upper jaw from the lower. In such a state, it is clear that nothing could save the lecture itself from reflecting his own feebleness and exhaustion, except the advantage of having been pre-composed in some happier mood. But that never happened: most unfortunately he relied upon his extempore ability to carry him through. Now, had he been in spirits, or had he gathered animation, and kindled by his own motion, no written lecture could have been more effectual than one of his unpremeditated colloquial harangues. But either he was depressed originally below the point from which any re-ascent was possible, or else this re-action was intercepted by continual disgust from looking back upon his own ill-success; for, assuredly, he never once recovered that free and eloquent movement of thought which he could command at any time in a private company. The passages he read, moreover, in illustrating his doctrines, were generally unhappily chosen, because chosen at haphazard, from the difficulty of finding at a moment's summons those passages which his purpose required. Nor do I remember any that produced much effect, except two or three, which I myself put ready marked into his hands, among the Metrical Romances edited by Ritson.*

Generally speaking, the selections were as injudicious and as inappropriate as they were ill delivered; for, amongst Coleridge's

* De Quincey is here speaking of Coleridge's 1808 lecture series, of which incomplete records have survived. His contemporary description of the lectures in a letter to the Wordsworths at Grasmere is still unenthusiastic, if more charitable: 'I meant to have dictated all that I remembered to some acquaintance and to have sent it to Grasmere; but I found that Mr. Coleridge considered it a very imperfect execution of his plan . . . being exceedingly ill on the day he delivered that lecture . . . [he] gave only one extempore illustration' (25th March 1808; Dove Cottage Collection).

accomplishments, good reading was not one; he had neither voice (so, at least, *I* thought) nor management of voice. This defect is unfortunate in a public lecturer; for it is inconceivable how much weight and effectual pathos can be communicated by sonorous depth and melodious cadences of the human voice to sentiments the most trivial; nor, on the other hand, how the grandest are emasculated by a style of reading which fails in distributing the lights and shadows of a musical intonation. However, this defect chiefly concerned the immediate impression; the most afflicting to a friend of Coleridge's was the entire absence of his own peculiar and majestic intellect; no heart, no soul, was in anything he said; no strength of feeling in recalling universal truths; no power of originality or compass of moral relations in his novelties: all was a poor faint reflection from jewels once scattered in the highway by himself in the prodigality of his early opulence—a mendicant dependence on the alms dropped from his own overflowing treasury of happier times.*

The next opportunity I had of seeing Coleridge was at the Lakes, in the winter of 1809, and up to the autumn of the following year. During this period it was that he carried on the original publication of 'The Friend'; and for much the greater part of the time I saw him daily. He lived as a visitor in the house occupied by Mr. Wordsworth. This house (Allan Bank by name) was in Grasmere; and in another part of the same vale, at a distance of barely one mile, I myself had a cottage, and a considerable library. Many of my books being German, Coleridge borrowed them in great numbers. Having a general licence from me to use them as he would, he was in the habit of accumulating them so largely at Allan Bank (the name of Mr. Wordsworth's house) that sometimes as many as five hundred were absent at once: which I mention in order to notice a practice of Coleridge's, indicating his very scrupulous honour in what regarded the rights of ownership. Literary people are not always so strict in respecting property of

* *Tait's* continues: 'Such a collapse, such a quenching of the eagle's talons, never was seen before. And as I returned from one of the most afflicting of these disappointments, I could not but repeat to myself part of that divine chorus,—

"Oh! dark, dark, dark!
Amid the blaze of noon
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse," &c. &c.'

this description; and I know more than one celebrated man who professes as a maxim that he holds it no duty of honour to restore a borrowed book; not to speak of many less celebrated persons, who, without openly professing such a principle, do however, in fact, exhibit a lax morality in such cases. The more honourable it was to poor Coleridge, who had means so trifling of buying books for himself, that, to prevent my flocks from mixing and being confounded with the flocks already folded at Allan Bank (his own and Wordsworth's), or rather that they *might* mix without danger, he duly inscribed my name in the blank leaves of every volume; a fact which became rather painfully made known to me; for, as he had chosen to dub me *Esquire*, many years after this it cost myself and a female friend some weeks of labour to hunt out these multitudinous memorials and to erase this heraldic addition; which else had the appearance to a stranger of having been conferred by myself.

'The Friend,' in its original publication, was, as a pecuniary speculation, the least judicious, both for its objects and its means, I have ever known. It was printed at Penrith, a town in Cumberland, on the outer verge of the Lake district, and precisely twenty-eight miles removed from Coleridge's abode. This distance, enough of itself, in all conscience, was at least trebled in effect by the interposition of Kirkstone, a mountain which is scaled by a carriage ascent of three miles long, and so steep in parts that, without four horses, no solitary traveller can persuade the neighbouring innkeepers to carry him. Another road, by way of Keswick, is subject to its own separate difficulties. And thus, in any practical sense, for ease, for certainty, and for despatch, Liverpool, ninety-five miles distant, was virtually nearer. Dublin even, or Cork, was more eligible. Yet, in this town, so situated as I have stated, by way of purchasing such intolerable difficulties at the highest price, Coleridge was advised, and actually persuaded, to set up a printer, to buy, to lay in a stock of paper, types, etc., instead of resorting to some printer already established in Kendal, a large and opulent town not more than eighteen miles distant, and connected by a daily post, whereas between himself and Penrith there was no post at all. Building his mechanical arrangements upon this utter 'upside-down' inversion of all common sense, it is not surprising (as 'madness ruled the hour') that in all other circumstances of plan or execution the work moved by

principles of downright crazy disregard to all that a judicious counsel would have suggested. The subjects were chosen obstinately in defiance of the popular taste; they were treated in a style studiously disfigured by German modes of thinking, and by a German terminology; no attempt was made to win or conciliate public taste; and the plans adopted for obtaining payment were of a nature to insure a speedy bankruptcy to the concern. Coleridge had a list—nobody could ever say upon whose authority gathered together—of subscribers. He tells us himself that many of these renounced the work from an early period; and some (as Lord Corke) rebuked him for his presumption in sending it unordered, but (as Coleridge asserts) neither returned the copies nor remitted the price. And even those who were conscientious enough to do this could not remit four or five shillings for as many numbers without putting Coleridge to an expense of treble postage at the least. This he complains of bitterly in his 'Biographia Literaria,' forgetting evidently that the evil was due exclusively to his own defective arrangements. People necessarily sent their subscriptions through such channels as were open to them, or such as were pointed out by Coleridge himself. It is also utterly unworthy of Coleridge to have taxed, as he does, many of his subscribers (or really, for anything that appears, the whole body) with neglecting to pay at all. Probably not one neglected. And some ladies, to my knowledge, scrupulously anxious about transmitting their subscriptions, paid three times over.* Managed as the reader will collect from these indications, the work was going down-hill from the first. It never gained any accessions of new subscribers; from what source, then, was the continual dropping off of names to be supplied? The printer became a bankrupt: Coleridge was as much in arrear with his articles as with his lectures at the Royal Institution. *That* he was from the very first; but now he was disgusted and desponding; and with No. 28 or 29 the work came to a final stop. Some years after, it was re-cast and re-published.† But, in

* *Tait's* reads: 'And, on the other hand, some, perhaps, did, as a most conscientious and venerable female relation of my own, who had subscribed merely to oblige me, and out of a general respect for Coleridge's powers, though finding nothing to suit her own taste: she, I happen to know, paid three times over, sending her money through three different channels according to the shifting directions which reached her.'

† Twenty-seven regular and one supplementary number of *The Friend* appeared between 1st June 1809 and 15th March 1810; the revised edition in

fact, this re-cast was altogether and absolutely a new work. The sole contributors to the original work had been, first of all, Wordsworth, who gave a very valuable paper on the principles concerned in the composition of Epitaphs; and, secondly, Professor Wilson, who, in conjunction with Mr. (now Dr.) Blair, an early friend, then visiting Mr. W. on Windermere, wrote the letter signed 'Mathetes,' the reply to which came from Wordsworth.

At the Lakes, and summoned abroad by scenery so exquisite—living, too, in the bosom of a family endeared to him by long friendship and by sympathy the closest with all his propensities and tastes—Coleridge (it may be thought) could not sequester himself so profoundly as at the 'Courier' Office within his own shell, or shut himself out so completely from that large dominion of eye and ear amongst the hills, the fields, and the woods, which once he had exercised so delightfully to himself, and with a participation so immortal, through his exquisite poems, to all generations. He was not now reduced to depend upon 'Mrs. Brainbridge'— (Mistress Brain—Brain—Brainbridge, I say— Oh heavens! *is* there, *can* there, *was* there, *will* there ever at any future period be, an undeniable use in saying and in pressing upon the attention of the Strand and Fleet Street at their earliest convenience the painful subject of Mistress Brain—Brain—Brainbridge, I say— Do you hear, Mrs. Brain—Brain—Brainbridge—? Brain or Bain, it matters little—Bran or Brain, it's all one, I conceive):—here, on the contrary, he looked out from his study windows upon the sublime hills of *Seat Sandal* and *Arthur's Chair*, and upon pastoral cottages at their feet; and all around him he heard hourly the murmurings of happy life, the

1818. The publication of the paper in Penrith was indeed as awkward as De Quincey says, but in fairness he should have pointed out that Coleridge first tried to have it printed at Kendal. The next proposal, which according to Coleridge's letter to Daniel Stuart originated with De Quincey, was to set up a print shop at Grasmere for the purpose of publishing not only *The Friend* but also 'editions of such of the eminently great Classics, English and Greek, as most need it' [PM 13th Feb. 1809]. De Quincey helped to get subscribers for *The Friend* and constituted himself its champion, but his 1809 letters to the Wordsworths reveal that he already had his doubts about the style: '*besides* the intricacy and weight of the thought, there is some other cause that makes it difficult to read a series of passages as "a fluency" (to quote Mr Wordsworth)—or so at least to give them the full effect of *Eloquence*' (30th September 1809; Dove Cottage Collection).

sound of female voices, and the innocent laughter of children. But apparently he was not happy; opium, was it, or what was it, that poisoned all natural pleasure at its sources? He burrowed continually deeper into scholastic subtleties and metaphysical abstractions; and, like that class described by Seneca in the luxurious Rome of *his* days, he lived chiefly by candlelight. At two or four o'clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance. Through the silence of the night, when all other lights had disappeared in the quiet cottages of Grasmere, *his* lamp might be seen invariably by the belated traveller, as he descended the long steep from Dunmailraise; and at seven or eight o'clock in the morning, when man was going forth to his labour, this insulated son of reverie was retiring to bed.

Society he did not much court, because much was not to be had; but he did not shrink from any which wore the promise of novelty. At that time the leading person about the Lakes, as regarded rank and station, amongst those who had any connection with literature, was Dr. Watson, the well-known Bishop of Llandaff. This dignitary I knew myself as much as I wished to know him; he *was* interesting; yet also *not* interesting; and I will speak of him circumstantially. Those who have read his Autobiography, or are otherwise acquainted with the outline of his career, will be aware that he was the son of a Westmoreland schoolmaster. Going to Cambridge, with no great store of classical knowledge, but with the more common accomplishment of Westmoreland men, and one better suited to Cambridge, viz. a sufficient basis of mathematics, and a robust though commonplace intellect for improving his knowledge according to any direction which accident should prescribe—he obtained the Professorship of Chemistry without one iota of chemical knowledge up to the hour when he gained it; and then, setting eagerly to work, that he might not disgrace the choice which had thus distinguished him, long before the time arrived for commencing his prelections he had made himself capable of writing those beautiful essays on that science which, after a revolution and a counter-revolution so great as succeeding times have witnessed, still remain a cardinal book of introductory discipline to such studies: an opinion deliberately expressed to myself by the late Sir Humphry Davy, and in answer to an earnest question which I took the liberty of proposing to him on that point. Sir

Humphry said he could scarcely imagine a time, or a condition of the science, in which the Bishop's 'Essays' would be superannuated. With this experimental proof that a Chemical Chair might be won and honoured without previous knowledge even of the chemical alphabet, he resolved to play the same feat with the Royal Chair of Divinity; one far more important for local honour and for wealth. Here, again, he succeeded; and this time he extended his experiment; for, whereas both Chairs had been won without *previous* knowledge, he resolved that in this case it should be maintained without *after* knowledge. He applied himself simply to the improvement of its income, which he raised from £300 to at least £1000 per annum. All this he had accomplished before reaching the age of thirty-five.

Riches are with us the parent of riches; and success, in the hands of an active man, is the pledge of further success. On the basis of this Cambridge preferment Dr. Watson built upwards, until he had raised himself, in one way or other, to a seat in the House of Lords, and to a commensurate income. For the latter half of his life, he—originally a village schoolmaster's son—was able to associate with the *magnates* of the land upon equal terms. And that fact, of itself, without another word, implies, in this country, a degree of rank and fortune which one would think a sufficient reward even for merit as unquestionable as was that of Dr. Watson, considering that in *quality* it was merit of so vulgar a class. Yet he was always a discontented man, a railer at the government and the age which could permit merit such as his to pine away ingloriously in one of the humblest amongst the bishoprics, with no other addition to its emoluments than the richest professorship in Europe, and such other accidents in life as gave him in all, perhaps, not above five thousand per annum! Poor man!—only five thousand per annum! What a trial to a man's patience!—and how much he stood in need of philosophy, or even of religion, to face so dismal a condition!

This bishop was himself, in a secondary way, no uninteresting study. What I mean is, that, though originally the furthest removed from an interesting person, being a man remarkable indeed for robust faculties, but otherwise commonplace in his character, worldly-minded, and coarse, even to obtuseness, in his sensibilities, he yet became interesting from the strength of *degree* with which these otherwise repulsive characteristics were

manifested. He was one of that numerous order in whom even the love of knowledge is subordinate to schemes of advancement; and to whom even his own success, and his own honour consequent upon that success, had no higher value than according to their use as instruments for winning further promotion. Hence it was that, when by such aids he had mounted to a certain eminence, beyond which he saw little promise of further ascent through any assistance of *theirs*—since at this stage it was clear that party connection in politics must become his main reliance—he ceased to regard his favourite sciences with interest. The very organs of his early advancement were regarded with no gratitude or tenderness, when it became clear that they could yield no more. Even chemistry was now neglected. This, above all, was perplexing to one who did not understand his character. For hither one would have supposed he might have retreated from his political disappointments, and have found a perpetual consolation in honours which no intrigues could defeat, and in the esteem, so pure and untainted, which still attended the honourable exertions of his youth. But he had not feeling enough for that view; he looked at the matter in a very different light. Other generations had come since then, and ‘other palms were won.’ To keep pace with the advancing science, and to maintain his station amongst his youthful competitors, would demand a youthful vigour and motives such as theirs. But, as to himself, chemistry had given all it *could* give. Having first raised himself to distinction by that, he had since married into an ancient family—one of the leaders amongst the landed aristocracy of his own county: he had thus entitled himself to call the head of that family—a territorial potentate with ten thousand per annum—by the contemptuous sobriquet of ‘Dull Daniel’; he looked down upon numbers whom, twenty years before, he scarcely durst have looked up to, except perhaps as a cat is privileged to look at a king; he had obtained a bishopric. Chemistry had done all this for him; and had, besides, co-operating with luck, put him in the way of reaping a large estate from the gratitude and early death of his pupil, Mr. Luther. All this chemistry had effected. Could chemistry do anything more? Clearly not. It was a burnt-out volcano. And here it was that, having lost his motives for cultivating it farther, he regarded the present improvers of the science, not with the feelings natural to a disinterested lover of such

studies on their own account, but with jealousy, as men who had eclipsed or had bedimmed his own once brilliant reputation. Two revolutions had occurred since his own 'palmy days'; Sir Humphry Davy, he said, might be right; and all might be gold that glistened; but, for his part, he was too old to learn new theories—he must be content to hobble to his grave with such old-fashioned creeds as had answered in his time, when, for aught he could see, men prospered as much as in this newfangled world. Such was the tone of his ordinary talk; and, in one sense—as regards personal claims, I mean—it was illiberal enough; for the leaders of modern chemistry never overlooked *his* claims. Professor Thomson of Glasgow always spoke of his 'Essays' as of a book which hardly any revolution could antiquate; and Sir Humphry Davy, in reply to a question which I put to him upon that point in 1813, declared that he knew of no book better qualified as one of introductory discipline to the youthful experimenter, or as an apprenticeship to the taste in elegant selection of topics.

Yet, querulous and discontented as the bishop was, when he adverted either to chemistry or to his own position in life, the reader must not imagine to himself the ordinary 'complement' and appurtenances of that character—such as moroseness, illiberality, or stinted hospitalities. On the contrary, his lordship was a joyous, jovial, and cordial host. He was pleasant, and even kind, in his manners; most hospitable in his reception of strangers, no matter of what party; and I must say that he was as little overbearing in argument, and as little stood upon his privilege in his character of a church dignitary, as any 'big wig' I have happened to know. He was somewhat pompous, undoubtedly; but that, in an old academic hero, was rather agreeable, and had a characteristic effect. He listened patiently to all your objections; and, though steeped to the lips in prejudice, he was really candid. I mean to say that, although, generally speaking, the unconscious pre-occupation of his understanding shut up all avenues to new convictions, he yet did his best to open his mind to any views that might be presented at the moment. And, with regard to his querulous egotism, though it may appear laughable enough to all who contrast his real pretensions with their public appreciation as expressed in his acquired opulence and rank, and who contrast, also, *his* case with that of other men in his own profession—with

that of Paley, for example—yet it cannot be denied that fortune had crossed his path, latterly, with foul winds, no less strikingly than his early life had been seconded by her favouring gales. In particular, Lord Holland¹ mentioned to a friend of my own the following anecdote: —‘What you say of the bishop may be very true’ (they were riding past his grounds at the time, which had turned the conversation upon his character and public claims): ‘but to *us*’ (Lord Holland meant to the Whig party) ‘he was truly honourable and faithful; insomuch that my uncle’ (meaning, of course, Charles Fox) ‘had agreed with Lord Grenville to make him Archbishop of York, *sede vacante*;—all was settled; and, had we staid in power a little longer, he would, beyond a doubt, have had that dignity.’

Now, if the reader happens to recollect how soon the death of Dr. Markham followed the sudden dissolution of that short-lived administration in 1807, he will see how narrowly Dr. Watson missed this elevation; and one must allow for a little occasional spleen under such circumstances. How grand a thing, how princely, to be an English archbishop! Yet, what an archbishop! He talked openly, at his own table, as a Socinian; ridiculed the miracles of the New Testament, which he professed to explain as so many chemical tricks, or cases of legerdemain; and certainly had as little of devotional feeling as any man that ever lived. It is, by comparison, a matter of little consequence that, so slightly regarding the Church of which he called himself a member in her spiritual interest, he should, in her temporal interests, have been ready to lay her open to any assaults from almost any quarter. He could naturally have little reverence for the rights of the shepherds, having so very little for the pastoral office itself, or for the manifold duties it imposes. All his public, all his professional duties, he systematically neglected. He was a lord in Parliament, and for many a year he never attended in his place: he was a bishop, and he scarcely knew any part of his diocese by sight, living three hundred miles away from it: he was a professor of divinity, holding the richest professorship in Europe—the weightiest, for its functions, in England—drawing, by his own admission, one thousand per annum from its endowments (deducting some stipend to his *locum tenens* at Cambridge), and

¹ It was *Lady* Holland. I know not how I came to make such a mistake. And the friend was Wordsworth. [Q.]

for thirty years he never read a lecture, or performed a public exercise. Spheres how vast of usefulness to a man as able as himself!—subjects of what bitter anguish on his deathbed to one who had been tenderly conscientious! In his political purism, and the unconscious partisanship of his constitutional scruples, he was a true Whig, and thoroughly diverting. That Lord Lonsdale or that the Duke of Northumberland should interfere with elections, this he thought scandalous and awful; but that a lord of the house of Cavendish or Howard, a Duke of Devonshire or Norfolk, or an Earl of Carlisle, should traffic in boroughs, or exert the most despotic influence as landlords, *mutato nomine*, he viewed as the mere natural right of property: and so far was he from loving the pure-hearted and unfactionous champions of liberty, that, in one of his printed works, he dared to tax Milton with having knowingly, wilfully, deliberately told a falsehood.¹

Could Coleridge—was it possible that he could reverence a man like this? Ordinary men might, because they were told that he had defended Christianity against the vile blasphemers and impotent theomachists of the day. But Coleridge had too pure an ideal of a Christian philosopher, derived from the age of the English Titans in theology, to share in that estimate. It is singular enough, and interesting to a man who has ever heard Coleridge talk, but especially to one who has *assisted* (to speak in French phrase) at a talking party between Coleridge and the Bishop, to look back upon an article in the 'Quarterly Review,' where, in connection with the Bishop's Autobiography, some sneers are dropped with regard to the intellectual character of the neighbourhood in which he had settled. I have been told, on pretty good authority, that this article was written by the late Dr. Whittaker of Craven, the topographical antiquarian; a pretty sort of person, doubtless, to assume such a tone, in speaking of a neighbourhood so dazzling in its intellectual pretensions as that region at that time. Listen, reader, and judge!

The Bishop had fixed his abode on the banks of Windermere. In a small, but by the necessity of its situation a beautiful park, he had himself raised a plain, but handsome and substantial mansion; Calgarth, or Calgarth Park, was its name. Now, at

¹ This supposed falsehood respected the sect called Brownists, and occurs in the 'Defensio pro Pop. Anglicano.' The whole charge is a blunder, and rests upon the bishop's own imperfect Latinity. [Q.]

Keswick (I am looking back to the sneer of the 'Quarterly Review') lived Southey; twenty miles distant, it is true, but still, for a bishop with a bishop's equipage, not beyond a morning's drive. At Grasmere, about eight miles from Calgarth, were to be found Wordsworth and Coleridge. At Brathay, about four miles from Calgarth, lived Charles Lloyd; and he, far as he might be below the others I have mentioned, could not in candour be considered a common man. Common! he was a man never to be forgotten! He was somewhat too *Rousseauish*; but he had, in conversation, the most extraordinary powers for analysis of a certain kind, applied to the philosophy of manners, and the most delicate *nuances* of social life; and his translation of 'Alfieri,' together with his own poems, shows him to have been an accomplished scholar. Then, not much above a mile from Calgarth, at his beautiful creation of Elleray, lived Professor Wilson; of whom I need not speak. He, in fact, and Mr. Lloyd were on the most intimate terms with the Bishop's family. The meanest of these persons was able to have 'taken the conceit' out of Dr. Whittaker and all his tribe. But even in the town of Kendal, about nine miles from Calgarth, there were many men of information, at least as extensive as Dr. Watson's, and amply qualified to have met him upon equal terms in conversation. Mathematics, it is well known, are extensively cultivated in the north of England. Sedburgh, for many years, was a sort of nursery or rural chapel-of-ease to Cambridge. Dawson of Sedburgh was a luminary better known than ever Dr. Watson was, by mathematicians both foreign and domestic. Gough, the blind mathematician and botanist of Kendal, is known to this day; but many others in that town had accomplishments equal to his; and, indeed, so widely has mathematical knowledge extended itself throughout Northern England that, even amongst the poor Lancashire weavers, mechanic labourers for their daily bread, the cultivation of pure geometry, in the most refined shape, has long prevailed; of which some accounts have been recently published. Local pique, therefore, must have been at the bottom of Dr. Whittaker's sneer. At all events, it was ludicrously contrasted with the true state of the case, as brought out by the meeting between Coleridge and the Bishop.

Coleridge was armed, at points, with the scholastic erudition which bore upon all questions that could arise in polemic divinity. The philosophy of ancient Greece, through all its schools, the

philosophy of the schoolmen technically so called, Church history, etc., Coleridge had within his call. Having been personally acquainted, or connected as a pupil, with Eichhorn and Michaelis, he knew the whole cycle of schisms and audacious speculations through which Biblical criticism or Christian philosophy has revolved in Modern Germany. All this was ground upon which the Bishop of Llandaff trod with the infirm footing of a child. He listened to what Coleridge reported with the same sort of pleasurable surprise, alternating with starts of doubt or incredulity, as would naturally attend a detailed report from Laputa—which ærial region of speculation does but too often recur to a sober-minded person in reading of the endless freaks in philosophy of Modern Germany, where the sceptre of Mutability, that potentate celebrated by Spenser, gathers more trophies in a year than elsewhere in a century; 'the anarchy of dreams' presides in her philosophy; and the restless elements of opinion, throughout every region of debate, mould themselves eternally, like the billowy sands of the desert as beheld by Bruce, into towering columns, soar upwards to a giddy altitude, then stalk about for a minute, all aglow with fiery colour, and finally unmould and 'dislimn,' with a collapse as sudden as the motions of that eddying breeze under which their vapoury architecture had arisen. Hartley and Locke, both of whom the Bishop made into idols, were discussed; especially the former, against whom Coleridge alleged some of those arguments which he has used in his 'Biographia Literaria.' The Bishop made but a feeble defence; and upon some points none at all. He seemed, I remember, much struck with one remark of Coleridge's, to this effect:—'That, whereas Hartley fancied that our very reasoning was an aggregation, collected together under the law of association, on the contrary, we reason by counteracting that law: just,' said he, 'as, in leaping, the law of gravitation concurs to that act in its latter part; but no leap could take place were it not by a counteraction of the law.' One remark of the Bishop's let me into the secret of his very limited reading. Coleridge had used the word 'apperception,' apparently without intention; for, on hearing some objection to the word, as being 'surely not a word that Addison would have used,' he substituted *transcendental consciousness*. Some months afterwards, going with Charles Lloyd to call at Calgarth, during the time when 'The Friend' was appearing, the Bishop again

noticed this obnoxious word, and in the very same terms:—‘Now, this word *apperception*, which Mr. Coleridge uses in the last number of “The Friend,” surely, surely it would not have been approved by Addison; no, Mr. Lloyd, nor by Swift; nor even, I think, by Arbuthnot.’ Somebody suggested that the word was a new word of German mintage, and most probably due to Kant—of whom the Bishop seemed never to have heard. Mean-time the fact was, and to me an amusing one, that the word had been commonly used by Leibnitz, a *classical* author on such subjects, 120 years before.

In the autumn of 1810, Coleridge left the Lakes; and, so far as I am aware, for ever. I once, indeed, heard a rumour of his having passed through with some party of tourists—some reason struck me at the time for believing it untrue—but, at all events, he never returned to them as a resident. What might be his reason for this eternal self-banishment from scenes which he so well understood in all their shifting forms of beauty, I can only guess. Perhaps it was the very opposite reason to that which is most obvious: not, possibly, because he had become indifferent to their attractions, but because his undecaying sensibility to their commanding power had become associated with too afflicting remembrances, and flashes of personal recollections, suddenly restored and illuminated—recollections which will

‘Sometimes leap
From hiding-places ten years deep,’

and bring into collision the present with some long-forgotten past, in a form too trying and too painful for endurance. I have a brilliant Scotch friend, who cannot walk on the sea-shore—within sight of its ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, the multitudinous laughter of its waves, or within hearing of its resounding uproar, because they bring up, by links of old association, too insupportably to his mind the agitations of his glittering, but too fervid youth. There is a feeling—morbid, it may be, but for which no anodyne is found in all the schools from Plato to Kant—to which the human mind is liable at times: it is best described in a little piece by Henry More, the ‘Platonist.’ He there represents himself as a martyr to his own too passionate sense of beauty, and his consequent too pathetic sense of its decay. Everywhere—above, below, around

him, in the earth, in the clouds, in the fields, and in their 'garniture of flowers'—he beholds a beauty carried to excess; and this beauty becomes a source of endless affliction to him, because everywhere he sees it liable to the touch of decay and mortal change. During one paroxysm of this sad passion, an angel appears to comfort him; and, by the sudden revelation of her immortal beauty, does, in fact, suspend his grief. But it is only a suspension; for the sudden recollection that her privileged condition, and her exemption from the general fate of beauty, is only by way of exception to a universal rule, restores his grief: 'And thou thyself,' he says to the angel—

'And thou thyself, that com'st to comfort me,
Wouldst strong occasion of deep sorrow bring,
If thou wert subject to mortality!'

Every man who has ever dwelt with passionate love upon the fair face of some female companion through life must have had the same feeling, and must often, in the exquisite language of Shakespeare's sonnets, have commanded and adjured all-conquering Time, there, at least, and upon that one tablet of his adoration,

'To write no wrinkle with his antique hand.'

Vain prayer! Empty adjuration! Profitless rebellion against the laws which season all things for the inexorable grave! Yet not the less we rebel again and again; and, though wisdom counsels resignation, yet our human passions, still cleaving to their object, force us into endless rebellion. Feelings the same in kind as these attach themselves to our mental power, and our vital energies. Phantoms of lost power, sudden intuitions, and shadowy restorations of forgotten feelings, sometimes dim and perplexing, sometimes by bright but furtive glimpses, sometimes by a full and steady revelation, overcharged with light—throw us back in a moment upon scenes and remembrances that we have left full thirty years behind us. In solitude, and chiefly in the solitudes of nature, and, above all, amongst the great and *enduring* features of nature, such as mountains, and quiet dells, and the lawny recesses of forests, and the silent shores of lakes, features with which (as being themselves less liable to change) our feelings have a more abiding association—under these circumstances it is that such evanescent hauntings of our past and forgotten selves are most

apt to startle and to waylay us. These are *positive* torments from which the agitated mind shrinks in fear; but there are others *negative* in their nature—that is, blank mementoes of powers extinct, and of faculties burnt out within us. And from both forms of anguish—from this twofold scourge—poor Coleridge fled, perhaps, in flying from the beauty of external nature. In alluding to this latter, or negative form of suffering—that form, I mean, which presents not the too fugitive glimpses of past power, but its blank annihilation—Coleridge himself most beautifully insists upon and illustrates the truth that all which we find in Nature must be created by ourselves; and that alike whether Nature is so gorgeous in her beauty as to seem apparelled in her wedding-garment or so powerless and extinct as to seem pallid in her shroud. In either case,

‘O, Lady, we receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone does nature *live*;
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud.

It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from *outward* forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are *within*.’

This was one, and the most common, shape of extinguished power from which Coleridge fled to the great city. But sometimes the same decay came back upon his heart in the more poignant shape of intimations and vanishing glimpses, recovered for one moment from the paradise of youth, and from fields of joy and power, over which, for him, too certainly, he felt that the cloud of night was settling for ever. Both modes of the same torment exiled him from Nature; and for the same reasons he fled from poetry and all commerce with his own soul; burying himself in the profoundest abstractions from life and human sensibilities.

‘For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient all I can;
And haply *by abstruse research to steal,*
From my own nature, all the natural man;
This was my sole resource, my only plan;
Till *that*, which suits a part, infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.’

Such were, doubtless, the true and radical causes which, for the final twenty-four years of Coleridge's life, drew him away from those scenes of natural beauty in which only, at an earlier stage of life, he found strength and restoration. These scenes still survived; but their power was gone, because *that* had been derived from himself, and his ancient self had altered. Such were the *causes*; but the immediate *occasion* of his departure from the Lakes, in the autumn of 1810, was the favourable opportunity then presented to him of migrating in a pleasant way. Mr. Basil Montagu, the Chancery barrister, happened at that time to be returning to London, with Mrs. Montagu, from a visit to the Lakes, or to Wordsworth. His travelling carriage was roomy enough to allow of his offering Coleridge a seat in it; and his admiration of Coleridge was just then fervent enough to prompt a friendly wish for that sort of close connection (viz. by domestication as a guest under Mr. Basil Montagu's roof) which is the most trying to friendship, and which in this instance led to a perpetual rupture of it. The domestic habits of eccentric men of genius, much more those of a man so irreclaimably irregular as Coleridge, can hardly be supposed to promise very auspiciously for any connection so close as this. A very extensive house and household, together with the unlimited licence of action which belongs to the *ménage* of some great Dons amongst the nobility, could alone have made Coleridge an inmate perfectly desirable. Probably many little jealousies and offences had been mutually suppressed; but the particular spark which at length fell amongst the combustible materials already prepared, and thus produced the final explosion, took the following shape:—Mr. Montagu had published a book against the use of wine and intoxicating liquors of every sort. Not out of parsimony or under any suspicion of inhospitality, but in mere self-consistency and obedience to his own conscientious scruples, Mr. Montagu would not countenance the use of wine at his own table. So far all was right. But doubtless, on such a system, under the known habits of modern life, it should have been made a rule to ask no man to dinner: for to force men, without warning, to a *single* (and, therefore, thoroughly useless) act of painful abstinence, is what neither I nor any man can have a right to do. In point of sense, it is, in fact, precisely the freak of Sir Roger de Coverley, who drenches his friend the 'Spectator' with a hideous decoction; not, as his confiding visitor

had supposed, for some certain and immediate benefit to follow, but simply as having a *tendency* (if well supported by many years' continuance of similar drenches) to abate the remote contingency of the stone. Hear this, ye Gods of the Future! I am required to perform a most difficult sacrifice; and forty years hence I *may*, by persisting so long, have some dim chance of a reward. One day's abstinence could do no good on *any* scheme: and no man was likely to offer himself for a second. However, such being the law of the castle, and that law well known to Coleridge, he nevertheless, thought fit to ask to dinner Colonel (then Captain) Pasley, of the Engineers, well known in those days for his book on the 'Military Policy of England,' and since for his 'System of Professional Instruction.' Now, where or in what land abides that

'Captain, or Colonel, or Knight-in-Arms,'

to whom wine in the analysis of dinner is a neutral or indifferent element? Wine, therefore, as it was not of a nature to be omitted, Coleridge took care to furnish at his own private cost. And so far, again, all was right. But why must Coleridge give his dinner to the captain in Mr. Montagu's house? There lay the affront; and, doubtless, it was a very inconsiderate action on the part of Coleridge. I report the case simply as it was then generally borne upon the breath, not of scandal, but of jest and merriment. The result, however, was no jest; for bitter words ensued—words that festered in the remembrance; and a rupture between the parties followed, which no reconciliation has ever healed.*

Meantime, on reviewing this story, as generally adopted by the learned in literary scandal, one demur rises up. Dr. Parr, a lisping Whig pedant, without personal dignity or conspicuous power of mind, was a frequent and privileged inmate at Mr. Montagu's. Him now—this Parr—there was no conceivable motive for enduring; that point is satisfactorily settled by the pompous

* It is curious that De Quincey does not mention here, as he does in his 1840 essay on 'Walking Stewart', a more serious misunderstanding which grew out of Montagu's tactless revealing to Coleridge of warnings Wordsworth had given him about the awkwardness of a house guest with such irregular habits as Coleridge's. Wordsworth's justifiable and probably well-meant advice resulted in hard feelings all around and a rupture between the two poets which never quite healed. De Quincey is wrong, however, in saying that Montagu and Coleridge were not reconciled: Coleridge left him a mourning ring in his will.

inanities of his works. Yet, on the other hand, his habits were in their own nature far less endurable than Samuel Taylor Coleridge's; for the monster smoked;—and how? How did the 'Birmingham Doctor'¹ smoke? Not as you, or I, or other civilized people smoke, with a gentle cigar—but with the very coarsest tobacco. And those who know how that abomination lodges and nestles in the draperies of window-curtains will guess the horror and detestation in which the old Whig's memory is held by all enlightened women. Surely, in a house where the Doctor had any toleration at all, Samuel Taylor Coleridge might have enjoyed an unlimited toleration.

* From Mr. Montague's, Coleridge passed, by favour of what introduction I never heard, into a family as amiable in manners and as benign in disposition, as I remember to have ever met with. On this excellent family I look back with threefold affection, on account of their goodness to Coleridge, and because they were then unfortunate, and because their union has long since been dissolved by death. The family was composed of three members: of Mr. M——,† once a lawyer, who had, however, ceased to practise; of Mrs. M——, his wife, a blooming young woman, distinguished for her fine person; and a young lady, her unmarried sister. Here, for some years, I used to visit Coleridge; and, doubtless, as far as situation merely, and the most delicate attentions from the most amiable women, *could* make a man happy, he must have been so at this time; for both the ladies treated him as an elder brother, or as a father. At length, however, the cloud of misfortune, which had long settled upon the prospects of this excellent family, thickened; and I found, upon one of my visits to

¹ 'Birmingham Doctor':—This was a *sobriquet* imposed on Dr. Parr by 'The Pursuits of Literature,' that most popular of satires at the end of the eighteenth and opening of the nineteenth centuries. The name had a mixed reference to the Doctor's personal connection with Warwickshire, but chiefly to the Doctor's spurious and windy imitation of Dr. Johnson. He was viewed as the Birmingham (or mock) Dr. Johnson. Why the word *Birmingham* has come for the last sixty or seventy years to indicate in every class of articles the spurious in opposition to the genuine, I suppose to have arisen from the Birmingham habit of reproducing all sorts of London or Paris trinkets, *bijouterie*, etc., in cheaper materials and with inferior workmanship. [Q.]

* Here begins the fourth instalment in *Tait's* (January 1835), which De Quincey omitted in his revision.

† John Morgan, with whose family Coleridge lived from 1811 to 1814.

London, that they had given up their house in Berners Street, and had retired to a cottage in Wiltshire. Coleridge had accompanied them; and there I visited them myself, and, as it eventually proved, for the last time. Some time after this, I heard from Coleridge, with the deepest sorrow, that poor M—— had been thrown into prison, and had sunk under the pressure of his misfortunes. The gentle ladies of his family had retired to remote friends; and I saw them no more, though often vainly making inquiries about them.

Coleridge, during this part of his London life, I saw constantly—generally once a day, during my own stay in London; and sometimes we were jointly engaged to dinner parties. In particular, I remember one party at which we met Lady Hamilton—Lord Nelson's Lady Hamilton—the beautiful, the accomplished, the enchantress! Coleridge admired her, as who would not have done, prodigiously; and she, in her turn, was fascinated with Coleridge. He was unusually effective in his display; and she, by way of expressing her acknowledgments appropriately, performed a scene in *Lady Macbeth*—how splendidly, I cannot better express, than by saying that all of us who then witnessed her performance, were familiar with Mrs. Siddons's matchless execution of that scene; and yet, with such a model filling our imaginations, we could not but acknowledge the possibility of another, and a different perfection, without a trace of imitation, equally original, and equally astonishing. The word 'magnificent' is, in this day, most lavishly abused; daily I hear or read in the newspapers of magnificent objects, as though scattered more thickly than blackberries; but for my part I have seen few objects really deserving that epithet. Lady Hamilton was one of them. She had Medea's beauty—and Medea's power of enchantment. But let not the reader too credulously suppose her the unprincipled woman she has been described. I know of no sound reason for supposing the connection between Lord Nelson and her to have been other than perfectly virtuous. Her public services, I am sure, were most eminent—for *that*, we have indisputable authority; and equally sure I am that they were requited with rank ingratitude.

After the household of the poor M——s had been dissolved, I know not whither Coleridge went immediately: for I did not visit London until some years had elapsed. In 1823–24 I first understood that he had taken up his residence as a guest with Mr.

Gillman, a surgeon, in Highgate. He had then probably resided for some time at that gentleman's; there he continued to reside on the same terms, I believe, of affectionate friendship with the members of Mr. Gillman's family, as had made life endurable to him in the time of the M——s; and there he died in July of the present year. If, generally speaking, poor Coleridge had but a small share of earthly prosperity, in one respect at least, he was eminently favoured by Providence: beyond all men who ever perhaps have lived, he found means to engage a constant succession of most faithful friends; and he levied the services of sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, from the hands of strangers—attracted to him by no possible impulses but those of reverence for his intellect, and love for his gracious nature. How, says Wordsworth—

—‘How can *he* expect that others should
Sow for him, reap for *him*, and, at his call,
I owe him, who for himself will take no thought at all?’

How can he, indeed? It is most unreasonable to do so: yet this expectation, if Coleridge ought not to have entertained, at all events he realized. Fast as one friend dropped off, another, and another, succeeded: perpetual relays were laid along his path in life, of judicious and zealous supporters; who comforted his days, and smoothed the pillow for his declining age, even when it was beyond all human power to take away the thorns which stuffed it.

And what *were* those thorns?—and whence derived? That is a question on which I ought to decline speaking, unless I could speak fully. Not, however, to make any mystery of what requires none, the reader will understand that *originally* his sufferings, and the death within him of all hope—the palsy, as it were, of that which is the life of life, and the heart within the heart—came from opium. But two things I must add—one to explain Coleridge's case, and the other to bring it within the indulgent allowance of equitable judges:—*First*, the sufferings from morbid derangements, originally produced by opium, had very possibly lost that simple character, and had themselves reacted in producing secondary states of disease and irritation, not any longer dependent upon the opium, so as to disappear with its disuse: hence, a more than mortal discouragement to accomplish this disuse, when the pains of self-sacrifice were balanced by no gleams of

restorative feeling. Yet, *secondly*, Coleridge did make prodigious efforts to deliver himself from this thralldom; and he went so far at one time in Bristol, to my knowledge, as to hire a man for the express purpose, and armed with the power of resolutely interposing between himself and the door of any druggist's shop. It is true that an authority derived only from Coleridge's will, could not be valid against Coleridge's own counter-determination: he could resume as easily as he could delegate the power. But the scheme did not entirely fail: a man shrinks from exposing to another that infirmity of will which he might else have but a feeble motive for disguising to himself; and the delegated man, the external conscience, as it were, of Coleridge, though destined—in the final resort, if matters came to absolute rupture, and to an obstinate duel, as it were, between himself and his principal—in that extremity to give way, yet might have long protracted the struggle, before coming to that sort of *dignus vindice nodus*: and in fact, I know, upon absolute proof, that, before reaching that crisis, the man shewed fight; and, faithful to his trust, and comprehending the reasons for it, declared that if he must yield, he would 'know the reason why.'

Opium, therefore, subject to the explanation I have made, was certainly the original source of Coleridge's morbid feelings, of his debility, and of his remorse. His pecuniary embarrassments pressed as lightly as could well be expected upon him. I have mentioned the annuity of £150 made to him by the two Wedgwoods. One half, I believe, could not be withdrawn, having been left by a regular testamentary bequest. But the other moiety, coming from the surviving brother, was withdrawn on the plea of commercial losses, somewhere, I think, about 1815. That would have been a heavy blow to Coleridge; and assuredly the generosity is not very conspicuous, of having ever suffered an allowance of that nature to be left to the mercy of accident. Either it ought not to have been granted in that shape—viz. as an *annual* allowance, giving ground for expecting its periodical recurrence—or it ought not to have been withdrawn. However, this blow was broken to Coleridge by the bounty of George IV., who placed Coleridge's name in the list of twelve to whom he granted an annuity of 100 guineas per annum. This he enjoyed so long as that Prince reigned. But at length came a heavier blow than that from Mr. Wedgwood: a new King arose, who knew not Joseph. Yet

surely *he* was not a King who could so easily resolve to turn adrift twelve men of letters, many of them most accomplished men, for the sake of appropriating a sum no larger to himself than 1200 guineas—no less to some of them than the total freight of their earthly hopes?—No matter: let the deed have been from whose hand it might, it was done: *εἰργασται* it was perpetrated, as saith the Medea of Euripides; and it will be mentioned hereafter, ‘more than either once or twice.’ It fell with weight, and with effect upon the latter days of Coleridge; it took from him as much heart and hope as at his years, and with his unworldly prospects, remained for man to blight: and, if it did not utterly crush him, the reason was—because for himself he had never needed much, and was now continually drawing near to that haven, in which, for himself, he would need nothing; secondly, because his children were now independent of his aid; and, finally, because in this land there are men to be found always of minds large enough to comprehend the claims of genius, and with hearts, by good luck, more generous, by infinite degrees, than the hearts of Princes.

Coleridge, as I now understand, was somewhere about sixty-two years of age when he died. This, however, I take upon the report of the public newspapers; for I do not, of my own knowledge, know anything accurately upon that point.

It can hardly be necessary to inform any reader of discernment or of much practice in composition, that the whole of this article upon Mr. Coleridge, though carried through at intervals, and (as it has unexpectedly happened) with time sufficient to have made it a very careful one, has, in fact, been written in a desultory and unpremeditated style. It was originally undertaken on the sudden but profound impulse communicated to the writer’s feelings, by the unexpected news of this great man’s death; partly, therefore, to relieve, by expressing his own deep sentiments of reverential affection to his memory, and partly, in however imperfect a way, to meet the public feeling of interest or curiosity about a man who had long taken his place amongst the intellectual *potentates* of the age. Both purposes required that it should be written almost *extempore*: the greater part was really and unaffectedly written in that way, and under circumstances of such extreme haste, as would justify the writer in pleading the very amplest privilege of licence and indulgent construction

which custom concedes to such cases. Hence it had occurred to the writer as a judicious principle, to create a sort of merit out of his own necessity; and rather to seek after the graces which belong to the epistolary form, or to other modes of composition professedly careless, than after those which grow out of preconceived biographies, which, having originally settled their plan upon a regular foundation, are able to pursue a course of orderly development, such as *his* slight sketch had voluntarily renounced from the beginning. That mode of composition having been once adopted, it seemed proper to sustain it, even after delays and interruption had allowed time for throwing the narrative into a more orderly movement, and modulating it, as it were, into a key of the usual solemnity. The *qualis ab incepto processerit*—the *ordo* prescribed by the first bars of the music predominated over all other considerations, and to such an extent, that he had purposed to leave the article without any regular termination or summing up—as, on the one hand, scarcely demanded by the character of a sketch so rapid and indigested, whilst, on the other, he was sensible that anything of so much pretension as a formal peroration, challenged a sort of consideration to the paper which it was the author's chief wish to disclaim. That effect, however, is sufficiently parried by the implied protest now offered; and, on other reasons, it is certainly desirable that a general glance, however cursory, should be thrown over the intellectual claims of Mr. Coleridge, by one who knew him so well, and especially in a case where those very claims constitute the entire and sole justification of the preceding personal memoir. That which furnishes the whole moving reason for any separate notice at all, and forms its whole latent interest, ought not, in mere logic, to be left without some notice itself, though as rapidly executed as the previous biographical sketch, and, from the necessity of the subject, by many times over more imperfect.

To this task, therefore, the writer now addresses himself; and, by way of gaining greater freedom of movement, and of resuming his conversational tone, he will here again take the liberty of speaking in the first person.

If Mr. Coleridge had been merely a scholar—merely a philologist—or merely a man of science—there would be no reason apparent for travelling in our survey beyond the field of his intellect, rigorously and narrowly so called. But because he was a

poet, and because he was a philosopher, in a comprehensive and a most *human* sense, with whose functions the moral nature is so largely interwoven, I shall feel myself entitled to notice the most striking aspects of his *character*, (using that word in its common limited meaning,) of his disposition, and his manners, as so many reflex indications of his intellectual constitution. But let it be well understood that I design nothing elaborate, nothing comprehensive or ambitious: my purpose is merely to supply a few hints and suggestions drawn from a very hasty retrospect, by way of adding a few traits to any outline which the reader may have framed to himself, either from some personal knowledge, or from more full and lively memorials.

One character, in which Mr. Coleridge most often came before the public, was that of politician. In this age of fervent partisanship, it will, therefore, naturally occur as a first question to inquire after his party and political connections: was he Whig, Tory, or Radical? Or, under a new classification, were his propensities Conservative or Reforming? I answer that, in any exclusive or emphatic sense, he was none of these; because, as a philosopher he was, according to circumstances, and according to the object concerned, all of these by turns. These are distinctions upon which a cloud of delusion rests. It would not be difficult to shew, that in the speculations built upon the distinction of Whig and Tory, even by as philosophic a politician as Edmund Burke, there is an oversight of the largest practical importance. But the general and partisan use of these terms superadds to this *πῶτον ψεύδος* a second which is much more flagrant. It is this: the terms Whig or Tory, used by partisans, are taken *extra gradum*, as expressing the ideal or extreme cases of the several creeds; whereas, in actual life, few such cases are found realized, by far the major part of those who answer to either one or the other denomination making only an approximation (differing by infinite degrees) to the ideal or abstract type. A third error there is, relating to the actual extent of the several denominations, even after every allowance made for the faintest approximations. Listen to a Whig, or to a Tory, and you will suppose that the great bulk of society range under his banner; all, at least, who have any property at stake. Listen to a Radical, and you will suppose that all are marshalled in the same ranks with himself, unless those who have some private interest in existing abuses, or have aristocratic privileges to defend. Yet,

upon going extensively into society as it is, you find that a vast majority of good citizens are of no party whatsoever, own no party designation, care for no party interest, but carry their good wishes by turns to men of every party, according to the momentary purpose they are pursuing. As to Whig and Tory, it is pretty clear that only two classes of men, both of limited extent, acknowledge these as their distinctions; first, those who make politics in some measure their profession or trade—whether by standing forward habitually in public meetings as leaders or as assistants, or by writing books and pamphlets in the same cause; secondly, those whose rank, or birth, or position in a city, or a rural district, almost pledges them to a share in the political struggles of the day, under the penalty of being held *fainéans*, truants, or even malignant recusants, if they should decline a warfare which often, perhaps, they do not love in secret. These classes, which, after all, are not numerous, and not entirely sincere, compose the whole extent of professing Whigs and Tories who make any approach to the standards of their two churches; and, generally speaking, these persons have succeeded to their politics and their party ties, as they have to their estates, viz. by inheritance. Not their way of thinking in politics has dictated their party connections; but these connections, traditionally bequeathed from one generation to another, have dictated their politics. With respect to the Radical or the Reformer, the case is otherwise; for, it is certain, that in this, as in every great and enlightened nation, enjoying an intense and fervid communication of thought through the press, there is, and must be, a tendency widely diffused to the principles of sane reform—an anxiety to probe and examine all the institutions of the land by the increasing lights of the age—and a salutary determination that no acknowledged abuse shall be sheltered by prescription, or privileged by its antiquity. In saying, therefore, that *his* principles are spread over the length and breadth of the land, the Reformer says no more than the truth. *Whig* and *Tory*, as usually understood, express only two modes of aristocratic partisanship: and it is strange, indeed, to find people deluded by the notion that the reforming principle has any more natural connection with the first than the last. *Reformer*, on the other hand, to a certain extent, expresses the political creed and aspect of almost every enlightened citizen: but, then, how? Not, as the *Radical* would insinuate, as pledging a man to a

specific set of objects, or to any visible and apparent party, having known leaders and settled modes of action. British society, in its large majority, may be fairly described as *Reformers*, in the sense of being favourably disposed to a general spirit of ventilation and reform carried through all departments of public business, political or judicial; but it is so far from being, therefore, true that men, in general, are favourably disposed to any known party, in or out of Parliament, united for certain objects and by certain leaders, that, on the contrary, this reforming party itself has no fixed unity, and no generally acknowledged heads. It is divided both as to persons and as to things; the ends to be pursued create as many schisms, as the course of means proper for the pursuit, and the choice of agents for conducting the public wishes. In fact, it would be even more difficult to lay down the ideal standard of a Reformer, or his abstract creed, than of a Tory; and, supposing this done, it would be found, in practice, that the imperfect approximations to the pure faith would differ by even broader shades, as regarded the reforming creed, than as regarded that of the rigorous or ultra Tory.

With respect to Mr. Coleridge, he was certainly a friend to all enlightened reforms: he was a friend, for example, to Reform in Parliament. Sensible, as he was, of the prodigious diffusion of knowledge and good sense amongst the classes immediately below the gentry in British society, he could not but acknowledge their right to a larger and a less indirect share of political influence. As to the plan, and its extent, and its particular provisions, upon those he hesitated and wavered; as other friends to the same views have done, and will continue to do. The only *avowed* objects of modern Reformers which he would strenuously have opposed, nay, would have opposed with the zeal of an ancient martyr, are those which respect the Church of England, and, therefore, most of those which respect the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. There he would have been found in the first ranks of the Anti-Reformers. He would also have supported the House of Peers as the tried bulwark of our social interests in many a famous struggle, and sometimes, in the hour of need, the sole barrier against despotic aggressions on the one hand, and servile submissions on the other. Moreover, he looked with favour upon many modes of aristocratic influence as balances to new-made commercial wealth, and to a far baser tyranny likely to arise from that

quarter when unbalanced. But allowing for these points of difference, I know of little else stamped with the general seal of modern Reform, and claiming to be a privileged object for a national effort, which would not have had his countenance. It is true, and this I am sensible will be objected, that his party connections were chiefly with the Tories; and it adds a seeming strength to this objection, that these connections were not those of accident, nor those which he inherited, nor those of his youthful choice. They were sought out by himself, and in his maturer years; or else they were such as sought *him* for the sake of his political principles; and equally, in either case, they argued some affinity in his political creed. This much cannot be denied. But one consideration will serve greatly to qualify the inference from these facts. In those years when Mr. Coleridge became connected with Tories, what was the predominating and cardinal principle of Toryism, in comparison with which all else was willingly slighted? Circumstances of position had thrown upon the Tories the *onus* of a great national struggle, the greatest which history anywhere records, and with an enemy the most deadly. The Whigs were then out of power: they were therefore in opposition; and that one fact, the simple fact of holding an anti-ministerial position, they allowed, by a most fatal blunder, to determine the course of their foreign politics. Napoleon was to be cherished simply because he was a thorn in Mr. Pitt's side. So began their foreign policy—and in that pettiest of personal views. Because they were anti-ministerial, they allowed themselves passively to become anti-national. To be a Whig, therefore, in those days, implied little more than a strenuous opposition to foreign war—to be a Tory, pledged a man to little more than war with Napoleon Bonaparte. And this view of our foreign relations it was that connected Coleridge with Tories,—a view which arose upon no motives of selfish interest, (as too often has been said in reproach,) but upon the changes wrought in the spirit of the French Republic, which gradually transmuted its defensive warfare (framed originally to meet a conspiracy of kings crusading against the new-born democracy of French institutions, whilst yet in their cradle) into a warfare of aggression and sanguinary ambition. The military strength evoked in France by the madness of European kings, had taught her the secret of her own power—a secret too dangerous for a nation of vanity so infinite, and so feeble in all means of moral self-restraint. The temptation

to foreign conquest was too strong for the national principles; and, in this way, all that had been grand and pure in the early pretensions of French Republicanism rapidly melted away before the common bribes of vulgar ambition. Unoffending states, such as Switzerland, were the first to be trampled under foot; no voice was heard any more but the 'brazen throat of war'; and after all that had been vaunted of a golden age, and a long career opened to the sceptre of pure political justice, the clouds gathered more gloomily than ever; and the sword was once more reinstated, as the sole arbiter of right, with less disguise and less reserve than under the vilest despotism of kings. The change was in the French Republicans, not in their foreign admirers; they, in mere consistency, were compelled into corresponding changes, and into final alienation of sympathy, as they beheld, one after one, all titles forfeited, by which that grand explosion of pure democracy had originally challenged and sustained their veneration. The mighty Republic had now begun to revolve through those fierce transmigrations foreseen by Burke, to every one of which, by turns, he had denounced an inevitable 'purification by fire and blood'; no trace remained of her primitive character: and of that awful outbreak of popular might, which once had made France the land of hope and promise to the whole human race, and had sounded a knell to every form of oppression or abuse, no record was to be found, except in the stupendous power which cemented its martial oligarchy. Of the people, of the democracy—or that it had ever for an hour been roused from its slumbers—one sole evidence remained; and that lay in the blank power of destruction, and its perfect organization, which none but a popular movement, no power short of that, could have created. The people having been unchained, and as if for the single purpose of creating a vast system of destroying energies, had then immediately recoiled within their old limits, and themselves become the earliest victim of their own stratocracy. In this way France had become an object of jealousy and alarm. It remained to see to what purpose she would apply her new energies. That was soon settled; her new-born power was wielded from the first by unprincipled and by ambitious men; and, in 1800, it fell under the permanent control of an autocrat, whose unity of purpose, and iron will, left no room for any hope of change.

Under these circumstances, under these prospects, coupled

with this retrospect, what became the duty of all foreign politicians? of the English above all, as natural leaders in any hopeful scheme of resistance? The question can scarcely be put with decency. Time and season, place or consideration of party, all alike vanished before an elementary duty to the human race, which much transcended any duty of exclusive patriotism. Plant it, however, on that narrower basis, and the answer would have been the same for all centuries, and for every land under a corresponding state of circumstances. Of Napoleon's real purposes there cannot *now* be any reasonable doubt. His confessions—and, in particular, his indirect revelations at St. Helena—have long since removed all demurs or scruples of scepticism. For England, therefore, as in relation to a man bent upon her ruin, all distinctions of party were annihilated—Whig and Tory were merged and swallowed up in the transcendent duties of patriots—Englishmen—lovers of liberty. Tories, *as* Tories, had here no peculiar or separate duties—none which belonged to their separate creed in politics. Their duties were paramount; and their partisanship had here no application—was perfectly indifferent, and spoke neither this way or that. In one respect only they had peculiar duties, and a peculiar responsibility; peculiar, however, not by any difference of quality, but in its supreme degree; the same duties which belonged to all, belonged to them by a heavier responsibility. And how, or why? Not *as* Tories had they, or could they have any functions at all applying to this occasion; it was as being then the ministerial party, as the party accidentally in power at the particular crisis: in *that* character it was that they had any separate or higher degree of responsibility; otherwise, and as to the *kind* of their duty apart from this degree, the Tories stood in the same circumstances as men of all other parties. To the Tories, however, as accidentally in possession of the supreme power, and wielding the national forces at that time, and directing their application—to them it was that the honour belonged of making a beginning: on them had devolved the privilege of opening and authorizing the dread crusade. How, and in what spirit they acquitted themselves of that most enviable task—enviable for its sanctity—fearful for the difficulty of its adequate fulfilment—how they persevered—and whether at any crisis, the direst and most ominous to the righteous cause, they faltered or gave sign of retreating—history will tell—history has already told.

To the Whigs belonged the duty of seconding their old antagonists: and no wise man could have doubted, that, in a case of transcendent patriotism, where none of those principles could possibly apply by which the two parties were divided and distinguished, the Whigs would be anxious to shew that, for the interests of their common country, they could cheerfully lay aside all those party distinctions, and forget those feuds which now had no pertinence or meaning. Simply as Whigs, had they stood in no other relation, they probably would have done so. Unfortunately, however, for their own good name and popularity in after times, they were divided from the other party, not merely as Whigs opposed to Tories, but also upon another and a more mortifying distinction, which was not, like the first, a mere inert question of speculation or theory, but involved a vast practical difference of honours and emoluments:—they were divided, I say, on another and more vexatious principle, as the *Outs* opposed to the *Ins*. Simply as Whigs, they might have coalesced with the Tories *quoad hoc*, and merely for this one purpose. But as men *out* of power, they could not coalesce with those who were *in*. They constituted ‘his Majesty’s Opposition’; and, in a fatal hour, they determined that it was fitting to carry their general scheme of hostility even into this sacred and privileged ground. That resolution once taken, they found it necessary to pursue it with zeal. The case itself was too weighty and too interesting to allow of any moderate tone for the abettors or opposers. Passion and personal bitterness soon animated the contest: violent and rash predictions were hazarded—prophecies of utter ruin and of captivity for our whole army were solemnly delivered: and it soon became evident, as indeed mere human infirmity made it beforehand but too probable, that where so much personal credit was at stake upon the side of our own national dishonour, the wishes of the prophet had been pledged to the same result as the credit of his political sagacity. Many were the melancholy illustrations of the same general case. Men were seen fighting against the evidences of some great British victory with all the bitterness and fierce incredulity which usually meet the first rumours of some private calamity: that was in effect the aspect in their eyes of each national triumph in its turn. Their position, connected with the unfortunate election made by the Whig leaders of their tone from the very opening of the contest, gave the character of a calamity

for them and for their party, to that which to every other heart in Britain was the noblest of triumphs in the noblest of causes; and, as a party, the Whigs mourned for years over those events which quickened the pulses of pleasure and sacred exultation in every other heart. God forbid that all Whigs should have felt in this unnatural way! I speak only of the tone set by the Parliamentary leaders. The few who were in Parliament, and exposed to daily taunts from the just exultation of their irritated opponents, had their natural feelings poisoned and envenomed. The many who were out of Parliament, and not personally interested in this warfare of the Houses, were left open to natural influences of patriotic pride, and to the contagion of public sympathy: and these, though Whigs, felt as became them.

These are things too unnatural to be easily believed, or in a land where the force of partisanship is less, to be easily understood. Being true, however, they ought not to be forgotten: and at present it is almost necessary that they should be stated for the justification of Coleridge. Too much has been written upon this part of his life, and too many reproaches thrown out upon his levity or his want of principle in his supposed sacrifice of his early political connections, to make it possible for any reverencer of Coleridge's memory to pass over the case without a full explanation. That explanation is involved in the strange and scandalous conduct of the Parliamentary Whigs. Coleridge passed over to the Tories only in that sense in which all patriots did so at that time, and in relation to our great *foreign* interest—viz. by refusing to accompany the Whigs in their almost perfidious demeanour towards Napoleon Bonaparte. Anti-ministerial they affect to style their policy, but in the most eminent sense it was anti-national. It was thus far—viz. exclusively, or almost exclusively, in relation to our great feud with Napoleon—that Coleridge adhered to the Tories. But because this feud was so capital and so earth-shaking a quarrel, that it occupied all hearts and all the councils of Christendom, suffering no other question almost to live in its neighbourhood, hence it happened that he who acceded to the Tories in this one chapter of their policy, was regarded as an ally in the most general sense. Domestic politics were then, in fact, forgotten; no question, in any proper sense a Tory one, ever arose in that era; or, if it had, the public attention would not have settled upon it; and it would speedily have been dismissed.

Hence I deduce as a possibility, and, from my knowledge of Coleridge, I deduce it as a fact, that his adhesion to the Tories was bounded by his approbation of their foreign policy; and even of *that*—rarely in its executive details, rarely even in its military plans, (for these he assailed with more keenness of criticism than to me the case seemed to justify,) but solely in its animating principle—its moving and sustaining force, viz. the doctrine and entire faith that Napoleon Bonaparte ought to be resisted, was not a proper object of diplomacy or negotiation, and could be resisted hopefully and triumphantly. Thus far he went along with the Tories: in all else he belonged quite as much to other parties—so far as he belonged to any. And that he did not follow any bias of private interest in connecting himself with Tories, or rather in allowing Tories to connect themselves with him, appears (rather more indeed than it ought to have appeared) on the very surface of his life. From Tory munificence he drew nothing at all, unless it should be imputed to his Tory connections that George IV. selected him for one of his academicians. But this slight mark of royal favour he owed, I believe, to other considerations; and I have reason to think that this way of treating political questions, so wide of dogmatism, and laying open so vast a field to scepticism that might else have gone unregarded, must have been held as evidence of too latitudinarian a creed to justify a title to Toryism. And, upon the whole, I am of opinion that few events of Mr. Coleridge's life were better calculated to place his disinterested pursuit of truth in a luminous aspect. In fact, his carelessness of all worldly interests was too notorious to leave him open to suspicions of that nature: nor was this carelessness kept within such limits as to be altogether meritorious. There is no doubt that his indolence concurred, in some degree, to that line of conduct and to that political reserve which would, at all events, have been pursued, in a degree beyond what honour the severest, or delicacy the most nervous, could have enjoined.

It is a singular anecdote, after all, to report of Coleridge, who incurred the reproach of having *rattled* solely by his inability to follow the friends of his early days into what his heart regarded as a monstrous and signal breach of patriotism, that in any eminent sense he was *not* a patriot. His understanding in this, as in many instances, was too active, too restless, for any abiding feelings to lay hold of him, unless when they coincided with some

palpable command of Nature. Parental love, for instance, was too holy a thing to be submitted for an instant to any scrutiny or any jealousy of his hair-splitting understanding. But it must be something as sacred and as profound as that which with Coleridge could long support the endless attrition of his too active intellect. In this instance, he had the same defect, derived in part from the same cause, as a contemporary, one of the idols of the day, more celebrated, and more widely celebrated, than Coleridge, but far his inferior in power and compass of intellect. I speak of Goethe: he also was defective, and defective under far stronger provocations and excitement, in patriotic feeling. He cared little for Weimar—and less for Germany. And he was, thus far, much below Coleridge—that the passion, which he could not feel, Coleridge yet obliged himself practically to obey in all things which concerned the world; whereas, Goethe disowned this passion equally in his acts—his words—and his writings. Both are now gone—Goethe and Coleridge: both are honoured by those who knew them, and by multitudes who did not. But the honours of Coleridge are perennial, and will annually grow more verdant; whilst from those of Goethe every generation will see something fall away, until posterity will wonder at the subverted idol, whose basis, being hollow and unsound, will leave the worship of their fathers an enigma to their descendants.

NOTE REFERRED TO ON PAGE 5

I have somewhere seen it remarked with respect to these charges of plagiarism, that, however incontrovertible, they did not come with any propriety or grace from myself as the supposed friend of Coleridge, and as writing my sketch of slight reminiscences on the immediate suggestion of his death. My answer is this: *I* certainly was the first person (first, I believe, by some years) to point out the plagiarisms of Coleridge, and above all others that circumstantial plagiarism, of which it is impossible to suppose him unconscious, from Schelling. Many of his plagiarisms were probably unintentional, and arose from that confusion between things floating in the memory and things self-derived, which happens at times to most of us that deal much with books on the one hand, and composition on the other. An author can hardly have written much and rapidly, who does not sometimes detect himself, and perhaps, therefore, sometimes fail to detect himself, in

appropriating the thoughts, images, or striking expressions of others. It is enough for his conscientious self-justification, that he is anxiously vigilant to guard himself from such unacknowledged obligations, and forward to acknowledge them as soon as ever they are pointed out. But no excess of candour the most indulgent will allow us to suppose that a most profound speculation upon the original relations *inter se* of the subjective and the objective, literally translated from the German, and stretching over some pages, could, after any interval of years, come to be mistaken by the translator for his own. This amounted to an entire essay. But suppose the compass of the case to lie within a single word, yet if that word were so remarkable, so provocative to the curiosity, and promising so much weight of meaning (which reasonably any great departure from ordinary diction *must* promise), as the word *esemplastic*,¹ we should all hold it impossible for a man to appropriate

¹ '*Esemplastic*' A writer in 'Blackwood,' who carried a wrath into the discussion for which I and others found it hard to account, made it a sort of charge against myself, that I had overlooked this remarkable case. If I *had*, there would have been no particular reason for anger or surprise, seeing that the particular German work in which these plagiarisms were traced had been lent to me under most rigorous limitations as to the time for returning it; the owner of the volume was going out of London, and a very few hours (according to my present remembrance only two) were all that he could allow me for hunting through the most impracticable of metaphysical thickets (what Coleridge elsewhere calls 'the holy jungle of metaphysics') Meantime I had *not* overlooked the case of *esemplastic*; I had it in my memory, but hurry of the press, and want of room, obliged me to omit a good deal. Indeed, if such omissions constituted any reproach, then the critic in 'Blackwood' was liable to his own censure. For I remember to this hour several Latin quotations made by Schelling, and repeated by Coleridge as his own, which neither I nor my too rigorous reviewer had drawn out for public exposure. As regarded myself, it was quite sufficient that I had indicated the grounds, and opened the paths, on which the game must be sought; that I left the rest of the chase to others, was no subject for blame, but part of my purpose, and, under the circumstances, very much a matter of necessity

In taking leave of this affair, I ought to point out a ground of complaint against my reviewer under his present form of expression, which I am sure could not have been designed. It happened that I had forgotten the particular title of Schelling's work. naturally enough, in a situation where no foreign books could be had, I quoted it under a false one. And this inevitable error of mine on a matter so entirely irrelevant is so described, that the neutral reader might suppose me to have committed against Coleridge the crime of Lauder against Milton—that is, taxing him with plagiarism by referring, not to real works of Schelling, but to pretended works, of which the very titles were forgeries of my own. This, I am sure, my unknown critic never could have meant. The plagiarisms were really there, more and worse in circumstance than any denounced by myself: and, of all men, the 'Blackwood' critic was the most bound to proclaim this or else what became of his own clamorous outcry? Being, therefore, such as I had represented, of what consequence was the special title of the German volume to which these plagiarisms were referred? [Q]

this word inadvertently. I, therefore, greatly *understated* the case against Coleridge, instead of giving to it an undue emphasis. Secondly, in stating it at all, I did so (as at the time I explained) in pure kindness. Well I knew that, from the direction in which English philosophic studies were now travelling, sooner or later these appropriations of Coleridge must be detected; and I felt that it would break the force of the discovery, as an unmitigated sort of police detection, if first of all it had been announced by one who, in the same breath, was professing an unshaken faith in Coleridge's philosophic power. It could not be argued that one of those who most fervently admired Coleridge, had professed such feelings only because he was ignorant of Coleridge's obligations to others. Here was a man who had actually for himself, unguided and unwarned, discovered these obligations; and yet, in the very act of making that discovery, this man clung to his original feelings and faith. But, *thirdly*, I must inform the reader that I was not, nor ever had been, the 'friend' of Coleridge in any sense which could have a right to restrain my frankest opinions upon his merits.

I never had lived in such intercourse with Coleridge as to give me an opportunity of becoming his friend. To *him* I owed nothing at all: but to the public, to the body of his own readers, every writer owes the truth, and especially on a subject so important as that which was then before me.

With respect to the comparatively trivial case of Pythagoras, an author of great distinction in literature and in the Anglican Church has professed himself unable to understand what room there could be for plagiarism in a case where the solution ascribed to Coleridge was amongst the commonplaces of ordinary English academic tuition. Locally this may have been so; but hardly, I conceive, in so large an extent as to make that solution *publici juris*. Yet, however this may be, no help is given to Coleridge; since, according to Mr. Poole's story, whether the interpretation of the riddle were or were *not* generally diffused, Coleridge claimed it for his own.

Finally—for distance from the press and other inconveniences of unusual pressure oblige me to wind up suddenly—the whole spirit of my record at the time (twenty years ago), and in particular the special allusion to the last Duke of Ancaster's case, as one which ran parallel to Coleridge's, involving the same propensity to appropriate what generally were trifles in the midst of enormous and redundant wealth, survives as an indication of the *animus* with which I approached this subject, starting even from the assumption I was bound to consider myself under the restraints of friendship—which, for the second time let me repeat, I was *not*. In reality, the notes contributed to the Aldine edition of the 'Biographia Literaria,' by Coleridge's admirable

daughter, have placed this whole subject in a new light; and, in doing this, have unavoidably reflected some degree of justification upon myself. Too much so, I understand to be the feeling in some quarters. This lamented lady is thought to have shown partialities in her distributions of praise and blame upon this subject. I will not here enter into that discussion. But, as respects the justification of her father, I regard her mode of argument as unassailable. Filial piety the most tender never was so finely reconciled with candour towards the fiercest of his antagonists. Wherever the plagiarism was undeniable, she has allowed it; whilst palliating its faultiness by showing the circumstances under which it arose. But she has also opened a new view of other circumstances under which an apparent plagiarism arose that was not real. I myself, for instance, knew cases where Coleridge gave to young ladies a copy of verses, headed thus—'Lines on ——, from the German of Holty.' Other young ladies made transcripts of these lines; and, caring nothing for the German authorship, naturally fathered them upon Coleridge, the translator. These lines were subsequently circulated as Coleridge's, and as if on Coleridge's own authority. Thus arose many cases of apparent plagiarism. And, lastly, as his daughter most truly reports, if he took—he gave. Continually he fancied other men's thoughts his own; but such were the confusions of his memory, that continually, and with even greater liberality, he ascribed his own thoughts to others.

ERRATA *Coll. Works*, vol. 2.

A more important oversight occurs in the long final note upon Coleridge's plagiarisms. The solution of the Pythagorean dark saying about beans (concerning the appropriation of which by Coleridge such varied opinions have been pronounced) does not need to be sought in German editions of Pythagoras, nor in the traditions of academic tuition: it is to be found in Plutarch. An hour or two after I had sent off this final note to the press [distant, unfortunately, seven miles, and accessible only by a *discontinuous* or zig-zag line of communications], I remembered, from a foot-note on Jeremy Taylor's 'Holy Living,' the following reference to Plutarch, which the bishop has chosen (against his usual practice) to give in Latin rather than in Greek:—'*Fabis abstine,*' dixit Pythagoras, '*olim enim magistratus per suffragia fabis lata creabantur.*' *Abstain from beans*, said Pythagoras, for in former times magisterial offices were created through suffrages conveyed by beans.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH *

IN 1807 it was, at the beginning of winter, that I first saw William Wordsworth. I have already mentioned † that I had introduced myself to his notice by letter as early as the spring of 1803. To this hour it has continued, I believe, a mystery to Wordsworth, why it was that I suffered an interval of four and a half years to slip away before availing myself of the standing invitation with which I had been honoured to the poet's house. Very probably he accounted for this delay by supposing that the new-born liberty of an Oxford life, with its multiplied enjoyments, acting upon a boy just emancipated from the restraints of a school, and, in one hour, elevated into what we Oxonians so proudly and so exclusively denominate 'a man,'¹ might have tempted me into pursuits alien from the pure intellectual passions which had so powerfully mastered my youthful heart some years before. Extinguished such a passion could not be; nor could he think so, if remembering the fervour with which I had expressed it, the sort of 'nympholepsy' which had seized upon me, and which, in some imperfect way, I had avowed with reference to the very lakes and mountains, amongst which the scenery of this most original poetry had chiefly grown up and moved. The very names of the ancient hills—Fairfield, Seat Sandal, Helvellyn, Blencathara,

¹ At the Universities at Oxford and Cambridge, where the town is viewed as a mere ministerial appendage to the numerous colleges—the civic Oxford, for instance, existing for the sake of the academic Oxford, and not *vice versa*—it has naturally happened that the students honour with the name of 'a man' him only who wears a cap and gown. The word is not used with any reference to physical powers, or to age; but simply to the final object for which the places are supposed to have first arisen, and to maintain themselves. There is, however, a ludicrous effect produced in some instances by the use of this term in contradistinguishing parties. 'Was he a man?' is a frequent question; and as frequent in the mouth of a stripling under nineteen, speaking, perhaps, of a huge, elderly tradesman—'Oh, no! not a man at all.' [Q.]

* A fuller version of this essay appeared in *Tait's* in January, February and April 1839

† Already mentioned in his essay 'Oxford', which appeared in *Tait's*, February 1835.

Glaramara; the names of the sequestered glens—such as Borrowdale, Martindale, Mardale, Wasdale, and Ennerdale; but, above all, the shy pastoral recesses, not garishly in the world's eye, like Windermere or Derwentwater, but lurking half unknown to the traveller of that day—Grasmere, for instance, the lovely abode of the poet himself, solitary, and yet sowed, as it were, with a thin diffusion of humble dwellings—here a scattering, and there a clustering, as in the starry heavens—sufficient to afford, at every turn and angle, human remembrances and memorials of time-honoured affections, or of passions (as the 'Churchyard amongst the Mountains' will amply demonstrate) not wanting even in scenic and tragical interest—these were so many local spells upon me, equally poetic and elevating with the Miltonic names of Valdarno and Vallombrosa.*

Deep are the voices which seem to call, deep is the lesson which would be taught even to the most thoughtless of men—

'Could field, or grove, or any spot on earth,
Show to his eye an image of the pangs
Which it hath witness'd; render back an echo
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod.'¹ †

* *Tait's* continues 'whilst, in addition to that part of their power, they had a separate fascination, under the anticipation that very probably I might here form personal ties which would for ever connect me with their sweet solitudes by powers deep as life and awful as death. Oh! sense of mysterious pre-existence, by which, through years in which as yet a stranger to these valleys of Westmoreland, I viewed myself as a phantom-self—a second identity projected from my own consciousness, and already living amongst them!—how was it, and by what prophetic instinct, that already I said to myself oftentimes, when chasing day-dreams along the pictures of these wild mountainous labyrinths, which as yet I had not traversed—Here, in some distant year, I shall be shaken with love, and there with stormiest grief?—when was it that sudden revelations came upon me, like the drawing up of a curtain, and closing again as rapidly, of scenes that made the future heaven of my life?—and how was it that in thought I *was* and yet in reality was *not* a denizen, already, in 1803-4-5, of lakes and forest lawns which I never saw till 1807?—and that, by prophetic instinct of the heart, I rehearsed and lived over, as it were, in vision, those chapters of my life which have carried with them the weightiest burthen of joy and sorrow, and by the margin of those very lakes and hills with which I prefigured this connexion?—and, in short, that for me, by a transcendant privilege, during the noviciate of my life, most truly I might say—

"In To-day already walked To-morrow?"

† *Tait's* continues: 'But if this recall of the real be affecting, much more so to me is this aerial and shadowy anticipation of the future, when looked back upon from far distance through a multitude of years, and when confirmed

Meantime, my delay was due to anything rather than to waning interest. On the contrary, the real cause of my delay was the too great profundity, and the increasing profundity, of my interest in this regeneration of our national poetry; and the increasing awe, in due proportion to the decaying thoughtlessness of boyhood, which possessed me for the character of its author. So far from neglecting Wordsworth, it is a fact * that twice I had undertaken a long journey expressly for the purpose of paying my respects to Wordsworth; twice I came so far as the little rustic inn (then the sole inn of the neighbourhood) at Church Coniston; and on neither occasion could I summon confidence enough to present myself before him. It was not that I had any want of proper boldness for facing the most numerous company of a mixed or ordinary character: reserved, indeed, I was, perhaps even shy—from the character of my mind, so profoundly meditative, and the character of my life, so profoundly sequestered—but still, from counteracting causes, I was not deficient in a reasonable self-confidence towards the world generally. But the very image of Wordsworth, as I prefigured it to my own planet-struck eye, crushed my faculties as before Elijah or St. Paul. Twice, as I have said, did I advance as far as the lake of Coniston; which is about eight miles from the church of Grasmere, and once I absolutely went forwards from Coniston to the very gorge of Hammerscar, from

for the great outlines of its sketches by the impassioned experience of life. *Why* I should have done so, I can hardly say, but that I did—even before I had visited Grasmere, and whilst it was almost certain, from the sort of channel in which my life seemed destined to flow, that London would be the central region of my hopes and fears—even then I turned to Grasmere and its dependencies as knit up, in some way as yet unknown, with my future destinies. Of this, were it not that it would wear a superstitious air, I could mention a very memorable proof from the records of my life in 1804, full three and a half years before I saw Grasmere. However, I allude to that fact in this place by way of shewing that Oxford had not weaned my thoughts from the northern mountains and their great inhabitants'

¹ See the divine passage (in the Sixth Book of 'The Excursion') beginning—

'Ah, what a lesson to a thoughtless man,' etc. [Q.]

* *Tatt's* adds. '(and Professor Wilson—who, without knowing me in those or for many subsequent years, shared my feelings towards both the poetry and the poet—has a story of his own experience, somewhat similar, to report)'.

which the whole Vale of Grasmere suddenly breaks upon the view in a style of almost theatrical surprise, with its lovely valley stretching before the eye in the distance, the lake lying immediately below, with its solemn ark-like island of four and a half acres in size seemingly floating on its surface, and its exquisite outline on the opposite shore, revealing all its little bays ¹ and wild sylvan margin, feathered to the edge with wild flowers and ferns. In one quarter, a little wood, stretching for about half a mile towards the outlet of the lake; more directly in opposition to the spectator, a few green fields; and beyond them, just two bowshots from the water, a little white cottage gleaming from the midst of trees, with a vast and seemingly never-ending series of ascents rising above it to the height of more than three thousand feet. That little cottage was Wordsworth's from the time of his marriage, and earlier; in fact, from the beginning of the century to the year 1808. Afterwards, for many a year, it was mine. Catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faintheartedly to Coniston, and so to Oxford, *re infectâ*.

This was in 1806. And thus far, from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, I had for nearly five years shrunk from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven, I longed.* In early youth I laboured under a peculiar embarrassment and penury of words, when I sought to convey my thoughts adequately upon

¹ All which inimitable graces of nature have, by the hands of mechanic art, by solid masonry, by whitewashing, etc., been exterminated, as a growth of weeds and nuisances, for thirty years. —August 17, 1853. [Q]

* *Tait's* continues: "These, the reader will say, were foolish feelings. Why, yes, perhaps they were; but they had a laudable foundation; for I carried my modesty to a laughable excess undoubtedly; but yet it was modesty which co-operated with other feelings to produce my foolish panic. I had lived in profounder solitude than can have fallen to the lot of many people, which arose from the unusual defect of sympathy I found in all around me; and this solitude gave a preternatural depth to my master feelings, which originally were deep enough; and, to speak phrenologically, the organ of veneration must have received an inordinate developement in my case. However, say what one can for it, no doubt my conduct was very absurd; and I began to think so myself. I fancied continually a plain, honest, old relative saying to me—"Let the man be a god even, he will shew himself very little of a good one if he is not satisfied with a devotion such as yours. You offer him almost a blamable adoration. What more can he require?"

interesting subjects: neither was it words only that I wanted; but I could not unravel, I could not even make perfectly conscious to myself, the subsidiary thoughts into which one leading thought often radiates; or, at least, I could not do this with anything like the rapidity requisite for conversation. I laboured like a sibyl instinct with the burden of prophetic woe, as often as I found myself dealing with any topic in which the understanding combined with deep feelings to suggest mixed and tangled thoughts: and thus partly—partly also from my invincible habit of reverie—at that era of my life, I had a most distinguished talent '*pour le silence*.' Wordsworth, from something of the same causes, suffered (by his own report to myself) at the same age from pretty much the same infirmity. And yet, in more advanced years—probably about twenty-eight or thirty—both of us acquired a remarkable fluency in the art of unfolding our thoughts colloquially. However, at that period my deficiencies were what I have described. And, after all, though I had no absolute cause for anticipating contempt, I was so far right in my fears, that since that time I have had occasion to perceive a worldly tone of

And if more he *does* require, hang me if I wouldn't think myself too good for any man's scorn; and, after one trial of it, I would wish him good morning for ever." Still I witnessed a case where a kind of idol had, after all, rejected an idolator that did not offer a splendid triumph to his pride; and with the additional cruelty of slighting this worshipper in behalf of one more brilliant, who seemed in great doubt whether he should admire or not. And, although I thought better of Mr. Wordsworth's moral nature than to suppose it possible for him to err in this extent, or even with this kind of insolence, yet I could not reconcile myself to the place of an humble admirer, valued, perhaps, for the right direction of his feelings, but practically neglected in behalf of some more gifted companion, who might have the power (which much I feared that I should never have) of talking to him on something like equal terms, as respected the laws and principles of poetry. I could bear well enough to be undervalued, or even openly scorned; for, said I to myself, it is the lot of every man in this world to be scored by somebody; and also, to balance that misfortune, every man has a chance of one worshipper. "I," says Sir Andrew Aguecheek—"I was adorned once." Yes, even Aguecheek had his one adorer; and there is not that immeasurable fool in this world, but that (according to La Fontaine's consolatory doctrine) he has a fair chance for finding "*un plus grand sot que lui-même*." But, with all this equanimity in my expectation and demands, philosophically as I could have reconciled myself to contempt, there was a limit. People there were in this world whose respect I could not dispense with: people also there *have been* in this world (alas! alas!) whose love was to me no less indispensable. Have it I must, or life would have had no value in my eyes. Was I then so deficient in conversational power that I could not hope to acquit myself respectably? . . .'

sentiment in Wordsworth, not less than in Mrs. Hannah More and other literary people, by which they were led to set a higher value upon a limited respect from a person high in the world's esteem than upon the most lavish spirit of devotion from an obscure quarter. Now, in that point, *my* feelings are far otherwise.*

Meantime, the world went on; events kept moving; and, amongst them, in the course of 1807, occurred the event of Coleridge's return to England from his official station in the Governor's family at Malta. At Bridgewater, as I have already recorded, in the summer of 1807, I was introduced to him. Several weeks after he came with his family to the Bristol Hotwells, at which, by accident, I was then visiting. On calling upon him, I found that he had been engaged by the Royal Institution to lecture at their theatre in Albemarle Street during the coming winter of 1807-8, and, consequently, was embarrassed about the mode of conveying his family to Keswick. Upon this, I offered my services to escort them in a post-chaise. This offer was cheerfully accepted; and at the latter end of October we set forwards—Mrs. Coleridge, viz. with her two sons—Hartley, aged nine, Derwent, about seven—her beautiful little daughter,¹ about five, and, finally, myself. Going by the direct route through Gloucester, Bridgenorth, etc., on the third day we reached Liverpool, where I took up my quarters at a hotel, whilst Mrs. Coleridge paid a visit of a few days to a very interesting family, who had become friends of Southey during his visit to Portugal. These were the Misses Koster, daughters of an English gold-merchant of celebrity, who had recently quitted Lisbon on the approach of the

¹ That most accomplished, and to Coleridge most pious daughter, whose recent death afflicted so very many who knew her only by her writings. She had married her cousin, Mr. Serjeant Coleridge, and in that way retained her illustrious maiden name as a wife. At seventeen, when last I saw her, she was the most perfect of all pensive, nun-like, intellectual beauties that I have seen in real breathing life. The upper parts of her face were verily divine. See, for an artist's opinion, the Life of that admirable man Collins, by his son. [Q.]

* *Tait's* continues: 'and, though it is praising myself to say so, yet say it I must, because it is mere truth—that, if a fool were so far to honour me as to profess in Sir Andrew Aguecheek's phrase, even to "adore" me—yes, though it were Sir Andrew himself—I should say, "My poor fool! thy adoration will do me but little good in this world; yet, to know that thy whole heart's wealth is given up to me, that forces me to value thy homage more than I would that of Solomon in all his glory."'

French army under Junot. Mr. Koster did me the honour to call at my quarters, and invite me to his house; an invitation which I very readily accepted, and had thus an opportunity of becoming acquainted with a family the most accomplished I had ever known. At dinner there appeared only the family party—several daughters, and one son, a fine young man of twenty, but who was *consciously* dying of asthma. Mr. Koster, the head of the family, was distinguished for his good sense and practical information; but, in Liverpool, even more so by his eccentric and obstinate denial of certain notorious events; in particular, some two years later, he denied that any such battle as Talavera had ever been fought, and had a large wager depending upon the decision. His house was the resort of distinguished foreigners; and, on the first evening of my dining there, as well as afterwards, I there met that marvel of women, Madame Catalani. I had heard her repeatedly; but never before been near enough to see her smile and converse—even to be honoured with a smile myself. She and Lady Hamilton were the most effectively brilliant women I ever saw. However, on this occasion, the Misses Koster outshone even La Catalani; to her they talked in the most fluent Italian; to some foreign men, in Portuguese; to one in French; and to most of the party in English; and each, by turns, seemed to be their native tongue. Nor did they shrink, even in the presence of the mighty enchantress, from exhibiting their musical skill.

Leaving Liverpool, after about a week's delay, we pursued our journey northwards. We had slept on the first day at Lancaster. Consequently, at the rate of motion which then prevailed throughout England—which, however, was rarely equalled on that western road, where all things were in arrear by comparison with the eastern and southern roads of the kingdom—we found ourselves, about three o'clock in the afternoon, at Ambleside, fourteen miles to the north-west of Kendal, and thirty-six from Lancaster. There, for the last time, we stopped to change horses; and about four o'clock we found ourselves on the summit of the White Moss, a hill which rises between the second and third mile-stones on the stage from Ambleside to Keswick, and which then retarded the traveller's advance by a full fifteen minutes, but is now evaded by a lower line of road. In ascending this hill, from weariness of moving so slowly, I, with the two Coleridges, had alighted; and, as we all chose to refresh ourselves by running

down the hill into Grasmere, we had left the chaise behind us, and had even lost the sound of the wheels at times, when all at once we came, at an abrupt turn of the road, in sight of a white cottage, with two yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls. A sudden shock seized me on recognizing this cottage, of which, in the previous year, I had gained a momentary glimpse from Hammerscar, on the opposite side of the lake. I paused, and felt my old panic returning upon me; but just then, as if to take away all doubt upon the subject, I saw Hartley Coleridge, who had gained upon me considerably, suddenly turn in at a garden gate; this motion to the right at once confirmed me in my belief that here at last we had reached our port; that this little cottage was tenanted by that man whom, of all the men from the beginning of time, I most fervently desired to see; that in less than a minute I should meet Wordsworth face to face. Coleridge was of opinion that, if a man were really and *consciously* to see an apparition, in such circumstances death would be the inevitable result; and, if so, the wish which we hear so commonly expressed for such experience is as thoughtless as that of Semele in the Grecian Mythology, so natural in a female, that her lover should visit her *en grand costume* *—presumptuous ambition, that unexpectedly wrought its own ruinous chastisement! Judged by Coleridge's test, my situation could not have been so terrific as *his* who anticipates a ghost; for, certainly, I survived his meeting; but at that instant it seemed pretty much the same to my own feelings.

Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself. Now, however, I *did* tremble; and I forgot, what in no other circumstances I could have forgotten, to stop for the coming up of the chaise, that I might be ready to hand Mrs. Coleridge out. Had Charlemagne and all his peerage been behind me, or Cæsar and his equipage, or Death on his pale horse, I should have forgotten them at that moment of intense expectation, and of eyes fascinated to what lay before me, or what might in a moment appear. Through the little gate I pressed forward; ten steps beyond it lay the principal door of the house. To this, no longer clearly conscious of my own feelings, I passed on rapidly; I heard

* *Tait's* adds: 'and "with his tail on".'

a step, a voice, and, like a flash of lightning, I saw the figure emerge of a tallish man, who held out his hand, and saluted me with most cordial expressions of welcome. The chaise, however, drawing up to the gate at that moment, he (and there needed no Roman nomenclator to tell me that this *he* was Wordsworth) felt himself summoned to advance and receive Mrs. Coleridge. I, therefore, stunned almost with the actual accomplishment of a catastrophe so long anticipated and so long postponed, mechanically went forward into the house. A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses, and in the summer and autumn with a profusion of jasmine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, and from the dark hue of the wainscoting, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air. However, I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room, through a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tallish young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features, advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth, cousin of the poet, and, for the last five years or more, his wife. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman neither handsome nor even comely according to the rigour of criticism—nay, generally pronounced very plain—to exercise all the practical fascination of beauty, through the mere compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. *Words*, I was going to have added; but her words were few. In reality, she talked so little that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to allege against her that she could only say ‘*God bless you!*’ Certainly, her intellect was not of an active order; but, in a

quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts; and it would have been strange, indeed, if she, who enjoyed such eminent advantages of training, from the daily society of her husband and his sister, failed to acquire some power of judging for herself, and putting forth some functions of activity. But undoubtedly that was not her element: to feel and to enjoy in a luxurious repose of mind—there was her *forte* and her peculiar privilege; and how much better this was adapted to her husband's taste, how much more adapted to uphold the comfort of his daily life, than a blue-stocking loquacity, or even a legitimate talent for discussion, may be inferred from his verses, beginning—

‘She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleam’d upon my sight.’

Once for all,¹ these exquisite lines were dedicated to Mrs. Wordsworth; were understood to describe her—to have been prompted by the feminine graces of her character; hers they are, and will remain for ever. To these, therefore, I may refer the reader for an idea of what was most important in the partner and second self of the poet. And I will add to this abstract of her *moral* portrait these few concluding traits of her appearance in a physical sense. Her figure was tolerably good. In complexion she was fair, and there was something peculiarly pleasing even in this accident of the skin, for it was accompanied by an animated expression of health, a blessing which, in fact, she possesses uninterruptedly. Here eyes, the reader may already know, were

‘Like stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight, too, her dark brown hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn.’

Yet strange it is to tell that, in these eyes of vesper gentleness, there was a considerable obliquity of vision; and much beyond that slight obliquity which is often supposed to be an attractive foible in the countenance: this *ought* to have been displeasing or

¹ *Once for all, I say*—on recollecting that Coleridge's verses to *Sara* were made transferable to any *Sara* who reigned at the time. At least three *Saras* appropriated them; all three long since in the grave. [Q]

repulsive; yet, in fact, it was not. Indeed all faults, had they been ten times more and greater, would have been neutralized by that supreme expression of her features to the unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts, of her countenance, concurred, viz. a sunny benignity—a radiant graciousness—such as in this world I never saw surpassed.*

Immediately behind her moved a lady, shorter, slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished for the most effective contrast. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown'; rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determinate gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition,† gave to her whole demeanour, and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment, and even of self-conflict, that was almost distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often suffered, in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility. At times, the self-counteraction and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer, and so determinately to stammer that a stranger who should have seen her and quitted her in that state of feeling would have certainly set her down for one plagued with that infirmity of speech as distressingly as Charles Lamb himself. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet—his 'Dorothy'; who naturally owed so much to the lifelong intercourse with her great brother in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and the worshippers of this great poet, are become equally her debtors—that,

* *Tait's* reads: 'never saw equalled or approached.'

† *Tait's* adds: '(for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children)'.

whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendency, too stern, too austere, too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was—the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German charcoal-burners—that first *couched* his eye to the sense of beauty, humanized him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiness of its trunks. The greatest deductions from Miss Wordsworth's attractions, and from the exceeding interest which surrounded her in right of her character, of her history, and of the relation which she fulfilled towards her brother, were the glancing quickness of her motions, and other circumstances in her deportment (such as her stooping attitude when walking), which gave an ungraceful, and even an unsexual character to her appearance when out-of-doors. She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually; and, in addition to the other great services which she rendered to her brother, this I may mention, as greater than all the rest, and it was one which equally operated to the benefit of every casual companion in a walk—viz. the exceeding sympathy, always ready and always profound, by which she made all that one could tell her, all that one could describe, all that one could quote from a foreign author, reverberate, as it were, à *plusieurs reprises*, to one's own feelings, by the manifest impression it made upon *hers*. The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and thoroughly unsystematic. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered lay where it could not be disturbed—in the temple of her own most fervid heart.*

Such were the two ladies who, with himself and two children,

* *Tait's* adds: 'In whatever I say or shall say of Miss Wordsworth, the reader may understand me to have the entire sanction and concurrence of Professor Wilson. We both knew Miss Wordsworth well; and we heartily agreed in admiring her.'

and at that time one servant, composed the poet's household. They were both, I believe, about twenty-eight years old; and, if the reader inquires about the single point which I have left untouched in their portraiture—viz. the style of their manners—I may say that it was, in *some* points, naturally of a plain household simplicity, but every way pleasing, unaffected, and (as respects Mrs. Wordsworth) even dignified. Few persons had seen so little as this lady of the world. She had seen nothing of high life, for she had seen little of any. Consequently, she was unacquainted with the conventional modes of behaviour, prescribed in particular situations by high breeding. But, as these modes are little more than the product of dispassionate good sense, applied to the circumstances of the case, it is surprising how few deficiencies are perceptible, even to the most vigilant eye—or, at least, essential deficiencies—in the general demeanour of any unaffected young woman, acting habitually under a sense of sexual dignity and natural courtesy. Miss Wordsworth had seen more of life, and even of good company; for she had lived, when quite a girl, under the protection of Dr. Cookson, a near relative, canon of Windsor, and a personal favourite of the Royal Family, especially of George III. Consequently, she ought to have been the more polished of the two; and yet, from greater natural aptitudes for refinement of manner in her sister-in-law, and partly, perhaps, from her more quiet and subdued manner, Mrs. Wordsworth would have been pronounced very much the more lady-like person.

From the interest which attaches to anybody so nearly connected as these two ladies with a great poet, I have allowed myself a larger latitude than else might have been justifiable in describing them. I now go on with my narrative:—

I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

‘Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire.’

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and, in other respects, pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the

poet's study and composing room; and such occasionally it was. But far oftener he both studied, as I found, and composed, on the high road. I had not been two minutes at the fireside, when in came Wordsworth, returning from his friendly attentions to the travellers below, who, it seemed, had been over-persuaded by hospitable solicitations to stay for this night in Grasmere, and to make out the remaining thirteen miles of their road to Keswick on the following day. Wordsworth entered. And '*what-like*' to use a Westmoreland as well as a Scottish expression—'*what-like*' was Wordsworth? A reviewer in '*Tait's Magazine*,' noticing some recent collection of literary portraits, gives it as his opinion that Charles Lamb's head was the finest among them. This remark may have been justified by the engraved portraits; but, certainly, the critic would have cancelled it, had he seen the original heads—at least, had he seen them in youth or in maturity; for Charles Lamb bore age with less disadvantage to the intellectual expression of his appearance than Wordsworth, in whom a sanguine complexion had, of late years, usurped upon the original bronzetint; and this change of hue, and change in the quality of skin, had been made fourfold more conspicuous, and more unfavourable in its general effect, by the harsh contrast of grizzled hair which had displaced the original brown. No change in personal appearance ever can have been so unfortunate; for, generally speaking, whatever other disadvantages old age may bring along with it, one effect, at least in male subjects, has a compensating tendency—that it removes any tone of vigour too harsh, and mitigates the expression of power too unsubdued. But, in Wordsworth, the effect of the change has been to substitute an air of animal vigour, or, at least, hardness, as if derived from constant exposure to the wind and weather, for the fine sombre complexion which he once wore, resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk.

Here, however, in describing the personal appearance of Wordsworth, I go back, of course, to the point of time at which I am speaking. He was, upon the whole, not a well-made man. His legs were pointedly condemned by all female connoisseurs in legs; not that they were bad in any way which *would* force itself upon your notice—there was no absolute deformity about them; and undoubtedly they had been serviceable legs beyond the average standard of human requisition; for I calculate, upon good

data, that with these identical legs Wordsworth must have traversed a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles—a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which, indeed, he was indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings. But, useful as they have proved themselves, the Wordsworthian legs were certainly not ornamental; and it was really a pity, as I agreed with a lady in thinking, that he had not another pair for evening dress parties—when no boots lend their friendly aid to mask our imperfections from the eyes of female rigorists—those *elegantes formarum spectatrices*. A sculptor would certainly have disapproved of their contour. But the worst part of Wordsworth's person was the bust; there was a narrowness and a droop about the shoulders which became striking, and had an effect of meanness, when brought into close juxtaposition with a figure of a more statuesque build. Once on a summer evening, walking in the Vale of Langdale with Wordsworth, his sister, and Mr. J——, a native Westmoreland clergyman, I remember that Miss Wordsworth was positively mortified by the peculiar illustration which settled upon this defective conformation. Mr. J——, a fine towering figure, six feet high, massy and columnar in his proportions, happened to be walking, a little in advance, with Wordsworth; Miss Wordsworth and myself being in the rear; and from the nature of the conversation which then prevailed in our front rank, something or other about money, devises, buying and selling, we of the rear-guard thought it requisite to preserve this arrangement for a space of three miles or more; during which time, at intervals, Miss Wordsworth would exclaim, in a tone of vexation, 'Is it possible,—can that be William? How very mean he looks!' And she did not conceal a mortification that seemed really painful, until I, for my part, could not forbear laughing outright at the serious interest which she carried into this trifle. She was, however, right, as regarded the mere visual judgment. Wordsworth's figure, with all its defects, was brought into powerful relief by one which had been cast in a more square and massy mould; and in such a case it impressed a spectator with a sense of absolute meanness, more especially when viewed from behind and not counteracted by his countenance; and yet Wordsworth was of a good height (five feet ten), and not a slender man;

on the contrary, by the side of Southey, his limbs looked thick, almost in a disproportionate degree. But the total effect of Wordsworth's person was always worst in a state of motion.* Meantime, his face—that was one which would have made amends for greater defects of figure. Many such, and finer, I have seen amongst the portraits of Titian, and, in a later period, amongst those of Vandyke, from the great era of Charles I., as also from the court of Elizabeth and of Charles II., but none which has more impressed me in my own time.

Haydon, in his great picture of 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem,' has introduced Wordsworth in the character of a disciple attending his Divine Master, and Voltaire in the character of a sneering Jewish elder. This fact is well known; and, as the picture itself is tolerably well known to the public eye, there are multitudes now living who will have seen a very impressive likeness of Wordsworth—some consciously, some not suspecting it. There will, however, always be many who have *not* seen any portrait at all of Wordsworth; and therefore I will describe its general outline and effect. It was a face of the long order, often falsely classed as oval: but a greater mistake is made by many people in supposing the long face which prevailed so remarkably in the Elizabethan and Carolinian periods to have become extinct in our own. Miss Ferrier, in one of her novels † ('Marriage,' I think), makes a Highland girl protest that 'no Englishman *with his round face*' shall ever wean her heart from her own country; but England is not the land of round faces; and those have observed little, indeed, who think so: France it is that grows the round face, and in so large a majority of her provinces that it has become one of the national characteristics. And the remarkable impression which an Englishman receives from the eternal recurrence of the

* *Tait's* continues: 'for, according to the remark I have heard from many country people, "he walked like a cade"—a cade being a sort of insect which advances by an oblique motion. This was not always perceptible, and in part depended (I believe) upon the position of his arms; when either of these happened (as was very customary) to be inserted into the unbuttoned waistcoat, his walk had a wry or twisted appearance; and not appearance only—for I have known it, by slow degrees, gradually to edge off his companion from the middle to the side of the highroad' **

† *Tait's* reads: 'brilliant novels'.

** 'In our Westmoreland highroads, which are so fortunate as to have little breadth beyond that of lanes, there is no side-path, not even on approaching towns; consequently everybody walks at large upon the carriage track.'

orbicular countenance proves of itself, without any *conscious* testimony, how the fact stands; in the blind sense of a monotony, not felt elsewhere, lies involved an argument that cannot be gainsaid. Besides, even upon an *a priori* argument, how is it possible that the long face so prevalent in England, by all confession, in certain splendid eras of our history, should have had time, in some five or six generations, to grow extinct? Again, the character of face varies essentially in different provinces. Wales has no connection in this respect with Devonshire, nor Kent with Yorkshire, nor either with Westmoreland. England, it is true, tends, beyond all known examples, to a general amalgamation of differences, by means of its unrivalled freedom of intercourse. Yet, even in England, law and necessity have opposed as yet such and so many obstacles to the free diffusion of labour that every generation occupies, by at least five-sixths of its numbers, the ground of its ancestors.

The movable part of a population is chiefly the higher part; and it is the lower classes that, in every nation, compose the *fundus*, in which lies latent the national face, as well as the national character. Each exists here in racy purity and integrity, not disturbed in the one by alien intermarriages, nor in the other by novelties of opinion, or other casual effects, derived from education and reading. Now, look into this *fundus*, and you will find, in many districts, no such prevalence of the round orbicular face as some people erroneously suppose; and in Westmoreland, especially, the ancient long face of the Elizabethan period, powerfully resembling in all its lineaments the ancient Roman face, and often (though not so uniformly) the face of northern Italy in modern times. The face of Sir Walter Scott, as Irving, the pulpit orator, once remarked to me, was the indigenous face of the Border: the mouth, which was bad, and the entire lower part of the face, are seen repeated in thousands of working-men; or, as Irving chose to illustrate his position, 'in thousands of Border horse-jockeys.' In like manner, Wordsworth's face was, if not absolutely the indigenous face of the Lake district, at any rate a variety of that face, a modification of that original type. The head was well filled out; and there, to begin with, was a great advantage over the head of Charles Lamb, which was absolutely truncated in the posterior region—sawn off, as it were, by no timid sawyer. The forehead was not remarkably lofty—and, by the way,

some artists, in their ardour for realizing their phrenological preconceptions, not suffering nature to surrender quietly and by slow degrees her real alphabet of signs and hieroglyphic characters, but forcing her language prematurely into conformity with their own crude speculations, have given to Sir Walter Scott a pile of forehead which is unpleasing and cataphysical, in fact, a caricature of anything that is ever seen in nature, and would (if real) be esteemed a deformity; in one instance—that which was introduced in some annual or other—the forehead makes about two-thirds of the entire face. Wordsworth's forehead is also liable to caricature misrepresentations in these days of phrenology: but, whatever it may appear to be in any man's fanciful portrait, the real living forehead, as I have been in the habit of seeing it for more than five-and-twenty years, is not remarkable for its height; but it *is*, perhaps, remarkable for its breadth and expansive development. Neither are the eyes of Wordsworth 'large,' as is erroneously stated somewhere in 'Peter's Letters'; on the contrary, they are (I think) rather small; but *that* does not interfere with their effect, which at times is fine, and suitable to his intellectual character. At times, I say, for the depth and subtlety of eyes, even their colouring (as to condensation or dilation), varies exceedingly with the state of the stomach; and, if young ladies were aware of the magical transformations which can be wrought in the depth and sweetness of the eye by a few weeks' walking exercise, I fancy we should see their habits in this point altered greatly for the better. I have seen Wordsworth's eyes oftentimes affected powerfully in this respect; his eyes are not, under any circumstances, bright, lustrous, or piercing; but, after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light; but, under favourable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from unfathomed depths: in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held 'the light that never was on land or sea,' a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any the most idealizing that ever yet a painter's hand created. The nose, a little arched, is large; which, by the way (according to a natural phrenology, existing centuries ago amongst some of the lowest amongst the human species), has always been accounted an unequivocal expression of animal appetites organically strong. And that

expressed the simple truth: Wordsworth's intellectual passions were fervent and strong; but they rested upon a basis of preternatural animal sensibility diffused through *all* the animal passions (or appetites); and something of that will be found to hold of all poets who have been great by original force and power, not (as Virgil) by means of fine management and exquisite artifice of composition applied to their conceptions. The mouth, and the whole circumjacent parts of the mouth, composed the strongest feature in Wordsworth's face; there was nothing specially to be noticed that I know of in the mere outline of the lips; but the swell and protrusion of the parts above and around the mouth are both noticeable in themselves, and also because they remind me of a very interesting fact which I discovered about three years after this my first visit to Wordsworth.

Being a great collector of everything relating to Milton, I had naturally possessed myself, whilst yet very young, of Richardson the painter's thick octavo volume of notes on the 'Paradise Lost.' It happened, however, that my copy, in consequence of that mania for portrait collecting which has stripped so many English classics of their engraved portraits, wanted the portrait of Milton. Subsequently I ascertained that it ought to have had a very good likeness of the great poet; and I never rested until I procured a copy of the book which had not suffered in this respect by the fatal admiration of the amateur. The particular copy offered to me was one which had been priced unusually high, on account of the unusually fine specimen which it contained of the engraved portrait. This, for a particular reason, I was exceedingly anxious to see; and the reason was—that, according to an anecdote reported by Richardson himself, this portrait, of all that were shown to her, was the only one acknowledged by Milton's last surviving daughter to be a strong likeness of her father. And her involuntary gestures concurred with her deliberate words:—for, on seeing all the rest, she was silent and inanimate; but the very instant she beheld that crayon drawing from which is derived the engraved head in Richardson's book, she burst out into a rapture of passionate recognition; exclaiming—'That is my father! that is my dear father!' Naturally, therefore, after such a testimony, so much stronger than any other person in the world could offer to the authentic value of this portrait, I was eager to see it.

Judge of my astonishment when, in this portrait of Milton, I

saw a likeness nearly perfect of Wordsworth, better by much than any which I have since seen of those expressly painted for himself. The likeness is tolerably preserved in that by Carruthers, in which one of the little Rydal waterfalls, etc., composes a background; yet this is much inferior, as a mere portrait of Wordsworth, to the Richardson head of Milton; and this, I believe, is the last which represents Wordsworth in the vigour of his power. The rest, which I have not seen, may be better as works of art (for anything I know to the contrary), but they must labour under the great disadvantage of presenting the features when 'de-featured,' in the degree and the way I have described, by the peculiar ravages of old age, as it affects this family; for it is noticed of the Wordsworths, by those who are familiar with their peculiarities, that in their very blood and constitutional differences lie hidden causes that are able, in some mysterious way,

'Those shocks of passion to prepare
That kill the bloom before its time,
And blanch, without the owner's crime,
The most resplendent hair.'

Some people, it is notorious, live faster by much than others, the oil is burned out sooner in one constitution than another: and the cause of this may be various; but in the Wordsworths one part of the cause is, no doubt, the secret fire of a temperament too fervid; the self-consuming energies of the brain, that gnaw at the heart and life-strings for ever. In that account which 'The Excursion' presents to us of an imaginary Scotsman who, to still the tumult of his heart, when visiting the cataracts of a mountainous region, obliges himself to study the laws of light and colour as they affect the rainbow of the stormy waters, vainly attempting to mitigate the fever which consumed him by entangling his mind in profound speculations; raising a cross-fire of artillery from the subtilizing intellect, under the vain conceit that in this way he could silence the mighty battery of his impassioned heart: there we read a picture of Wordsworth and his own youth. In Miss Wordsworth every thoughtful observer might read the same self-consuming style of thought. And the effect upon each was so powerful for the promotion of a premature old age, and of a premature expression of old age, that strangers invariably supposed them fifteen to twenty years older than they were. And I remember Wordsworth

once laughingly reporting to me, on returning from a short journey in 1809, a little personal anecdote, which sufficiently showed what was the spontaneous impression upon that subject of casual strangers, whose feelings were not confused by previous knowledge of the truth. He was travelling by a stage-coach, and seated outside, amongst a good half-dozen of fellow-passengers. One of these, an elderly man, who confessed to having passed the grand climacterical year (9 multiplied into 7) of 63, though he did not say precisely by how many years, said to Wordsworth, upon some anticipations which they had been mutually discussing of changes likely to result from enclosures, etc., then going on or projecting—'Ay, ay, another dozen of years will show us strange sights; but you and I can hardly expect to see them.'—'How so?' said Wordsworth. 'How so, my friend? How old do you take me to be?'—'Oh, I beg pardon,' said the other; 'I meant no offence—but what?' looking at Wordsworth more attentively—'you'll never see threescore, I'm of opinion'; meaning to say that Wordsworth *had* seen it already. And, to show that he was not singular in so thinking, he appealed to all the other passengers; and the motion passed (*nem. con.*) that Wordsworth was rather over than under sixty. Upon this he told them the literal truth—that he had not yet accomplished his thirty-ninth year. 'God bless me!' said the climacterical man; 'so then, after all, you'll have a chance to see your childer get up like, and get settled! Only to think of that!' And so closed the conversation, leaving to Wordsworth an undeniable record of his own prematurely expressed old age in this unaffected astonishment, amongst a whole party of plain men, that he could really belong to a generation of the forward-looking, who live by hope; and might reasonably expect to see a child of seven years old matured into a man. And yet, as Wordsworth lived into his 82nd year, it is plain that the premature expression of decay does not argue any real decay.*

Returning to the question of portraits, I would observe that this Richardson engraving of Milton has the advantage of presenting, not only by far the best likeness of Wordsworth, but of Wordsworth in the prime of his powers—a point essential in the case of one so liable to premature decay. It may be supposed that I took an early opportunity of carrying the book down to Grasmere, and

* Wordsworth lived only into his eighty-first year, dying in 1850

calling for the opinions of Wordsworth's family upon this most remarkable coincidence. Not one member of that family but was as much impressed as myself with the accuracy of the likeness. All the peculiarities even were retained—a drooping appearance of the eyelids, that remarkable swell which I have noticed about the mouth, the way in which the hair lay upon the forehead. In two points only there was a deviation from the rigorous truth of Wordsworth's features—the face was a little too short and too broad, and the eyes were too large. There was also a wreath of laurel about the head, which (as Wordsworth remarked) disturbed the natural expression of the whole picture; else, and with these few allowances, he also admitted that the resemblance was, *for that period of his life*, perfect, or as nearly so as art could accomplish.

I have gone into so large and circumstantial a review of my recollections on this point as would have been trifling and tedious in excess, had these recollections related to a less important man; but I have a certain knowledge that the least of them will possess a lasting and a growing interest in connection with William Wordsworth.* How peculiar, how different from the interest which we grant to the ideas of a great philosopher, a great mathematician, or a great reformer, is that burning interest which settles on the great poets who have made themselves necessary to the human heart; who have first brought into consciousness, and have clothed in words, those grand catholic feelings that belong to the grand catholic situations of life through all its stages; who have clothed them in such words that human wit despairs of bettering them! Mighty were the powers, solemn and serene is the memory, of Archimedes; and Apollonius shines like 'the starry Galileo' in the firmament of human genius; yet how frosty is the feeling associated with these names by comparison with that which, upon every sunny lawn, by the side of every ancient forest, even in the farthest depths of Canada, many a young innocent girl, perhaps

* *Tait's* continues: '—a man who is not simply destined to be had in everlasting remembrance by every generation of men, but (which is a modification of the kind worth any multiplication of the degree) to be had in that sort of remembrance which has for its shrine the heart of man—that world of fear and grief, of love and trembling hope, which constitutes the essential man; in *that* sort of remembrance, and not in such a remembrance as we grant to the ideas of a great philosopher, a great mathematician, or a great reformer.'

at this very moment—looking now with fear to the dark recesses of the infinite forest, and now with love to the pages of the infinite poet, until the fear is absorbed and forgotten in the love—cherishes in her heart for the name and person of Shakspeare! *

* *Tait's* continues: ' . . . Such a place in the affections of the young and the ingenuous, no less than of the old and philosophic, who happen to have any depth of feeling, will Wordsworth occupy in every clime and in every land; for the language in which he writes, thanks be to Providence, which has beneficently opened the widest channels for the purest and most elevating literature, is now ineradicably planted in all quarters of the earth; the echoes under every latitude of every longitude now reverberate English words; and all things seem tending to this result—that the English and the Spanish languages will finally share the earth between them. Wordsworth is peculiarly the poet for the solitary and the meditative, and, throughout the countless myriads of future America and future Australia, no less than Polynesia and Southern Africa, there will be situations without end fitted by their loneliness to favour his influence for centuries to come, by the end of which period it may be anticipated that education (of a more enlightened quality and more systematic than yet prevails) may have wrought such changes on the human species, as will uphold the growth of all philosophy, and, therefore, of all poetry which has its foundations laid in the heart of man. Commensurate with the interest in the poetry will be a secondary interest in the poet—in his personal appearance, and his habits of life, *so far as they can be supposed at all dependent upon his intellectual characteristics*; for, with respect to differences that are purely casual, and which illustrate no principle of higher origin than accidents of education or chance position, it is a gossiping taste only that could seek for such information, and a gossiping taste that would choose to consult it. Meantime, it is under no such gossiping taste that volumes have been written upon the mere portraits and upon the possible portraits of Shakspeare, and how invaluable should we all feel any record to be, which should raise the curtain upon Shakspeare's daily life—his habits, personal and social, his intellectual tastes, and his opinions on contemporary men, books, events, or national prospects! I cannot, therefore, think it necessary to apologize for the most circumstantial notices past or to come of Wordsworth's person and habits of life. But one thing it is highly necessary that I should explain, and the more so because a grand confession which I shall make at this point, as in some measure necessary to protect myself from the appearance of needless mystery and reserve, would, if unaccompanied by such an explanation, expose me to the suspicion of having, at times, yielded to a private prejudice, so far as to colour my account of Wordsworth with a spirit of pique or illiberality. I shall acknowledge then, on my own part—and I feel that I might even make the same acknowledgement on the part of Professor Wilson, (though I have no authority for doing so)—that to neither of us, though, at all periods of our lives, treating him with the deep respect which is his due, and, in our earlier years, with a more than filial devotion—nay, with a blind loyalty of homage, which had in it, at that time, something of the spirit of martyrdom, which, for his sake, courted even reproach and contumely; yet to neither of us has Wordsworth made those returns of friendship and kindness which most firmly I maintain that we were entitled to have challenged. More by far in sorrow than in anger—sorrow that points to recollections too deep and too personal for a transient notice—I acknowledge myself to have been long alienated from Wordsworth; sometimes even I feel a rising emotion of

hostility—nay, something, I fear, too nearly akin to vindictive hatred. Strange revolution of the human heart! strange example of the changes in human feeling that may be wrought by time and chance! to find myself carried by the great tide of affairs, and by error, more or less on one side or the other, either on Wordsworth's in doing too little, or on mine in expecting too much—carried so far away from that early position which, for so long a course of years, I held in respect to him—that now, for that fountain of love towards Mr. Wordsworth and all his household—fountain profound—fountain inexhaustible—

“Whose only business was to flow—
And flow it did, not taking heed
Of its own bounty or their need”—

now, I find myself standing aloof, gloomily granting (because I cannot refuse) my intellectual homage, but no longer rendering my tribute as a willing service of the heart, or rejoicing in the prosperity of my idol! Could I have believed, twenty-five years ago, had a voice from Heaven revealed it, that, even then, with a view to what time should bring about, I might adopt the spirit of the old verses, and, apostrophizing Wordsworth, might say—Great Poet! when that day, so fervently desired, shall come, that men shall undo their wrongs, and when every tongue shall chant thy praises, and every heart

“Devote a wreath to thee—
That day (for come it will) that day
Shall I lament to see ”

“But no; not so. Lament I never did, nor suffered even “the hectic of a moment” to sully or to trouble that purity of perfect pleasure with which I welcomed this great revolution in the public feeling. Let me render justice to Professor Wilson, as well as to myself—not for a moment, not by a solitary movement of reluctance or demur, did either of us hang back in giving that public acclamation which we, by so many years, had anticipated; yes, we singly—we with no sympathy to support us from any quarter. The public press remains, with its inexorable records, to vouch for us, that we paid an oriental homage, homage as to one who could have pleaded antique privilege, and the consecration of centuries, at a time when the finger of scorn was pointed at Mr. Wordsworth from every journal in the land; and that we persisted in this homage at a period long enough removed to have revolutionized the public mind, and also long enough to have undermined the personal relations between us of confidential friendship. Did it ask no courage to come forward, in the first character, as solitary friends, holding up our protesting hands amidst a wilderness of chattering buffoons? Did it ask no magnanimity to stand firmly to the post we had assumed, not passively acquiescing in the new state of public opinion, but exulting in it and aiding it, long after we had found reason to think ourselves injuriously treated? Times are changed; it needs no courage, in the year of our Lord 1839, to discover and proclaim a great poet in William Wordsworth; it needed none in the year 1815, to discover a frail power in the French empire, or an idol of clay and brass in the French Emperor. But, to make the first discovery in the years 1801-2, the other in 1808, those things were worthy of honour, and the first was worthy of gratitude from all the parties interested in the event. Let me not, however, be misunderstood—Mr. Wordsworth is a man of unimpeached, unimpeachable integrity: he neither has done, nor could have done, consciously, any act in violation of his conscience. On the contrary, I am satisfied, Professor Wilson is satisfied, that injuries of a kind

The English language is travelling fast towards the fulfilment of its destiny. Through the influence of the dreadful Republic¹ that within the thirty last years has run through all the stages of

to involve an admitted violation of principle, cannot have occurred in Mr. Wordsworth's intercourse with any man. But there are cases of wrong for which the conscience is not the competent tribunal. Sensibility to the just claims of another, power to appreciate these claims, power also to perceive the true mode of conveying and expressing the appreciation—in a case, suppose, where the claims to consideration are at once real, and even tangible, as to their ground, yet subtle and aerial as to the shape they have assumed—claims, for instance, founded on a personal devotion to the interests of the other party, when the rest of the world slighted them—this mode of appreciating skill may be utterly wanting, or may be crossed and thwarted by many a conflicting bias, where the conscience is quite incapable of going astray. I imagine a case such as this which follows:—The case of a man who, for many years, has connected himself closely with the domestic griefs and joys of another, over and above his primary service of giving to him the strength and encouragement of a profound literary sympathy, at a time of universal scowling from the world; suppose this man to fall into a situation in which, from want of natural connexions and from his state of insulation in life, it might be most important to his feelings that some support should be lent to him by a family having a known place and acceptance, and what may be called a root in the country, by means of connexions, descent, and long settlement. To look for this, might be a most humble demand on the part of one who had testified his devotion in the way supposed. To miss it might—But enough I murmur not, complaint is weak at all times; and the hour is passed irrevocably, and by many a year, in which an act of friendship so natural, and costing so little, (in both senses so priceless,) could have been availing. The ear is deaf that should have been solaced by the sound of welcome. Call, but you will not be heard; shout aloud, but your "ave!" and "all hail!" will now tell only as an echo of departed days, proclaiming the hollowness of human hopes. I, for my part, have long learned the lesson of suffering in silence, and also I have learned to know that, wheresoever female prejudices are concerned, *there* it will be a trial more than Herculean, of a man's wisdom, if he can walk with an even step, and swerve neither to the right nor the left' [De Quincey gives a fuller account of his alienation from the Wordsworths in an essay on 'Walking Stewart.' (*Tait's*, Oct. 1840.)]

¹ Not many months ago, the blind hostility of the Irish newspaper editors in America forged a ludicrous estimate of the Irish numerical preponderance in the United States, from which it was inferred, as at least a possibility, that the Irish Celtic language might come to dispute the pre-eminence with the English. Others anticipated the same destiny for the German. But, in the meantime, the unresting career of the law-courts, of commerce, and of the national senate, that cannot suspend themselves for an hour, reduce the case to this dilemma: If the Irish and the Germans in the United States adapt their general schemes of education to the service of their public ambition, they must begin by training themselves to the use of the language now prevailing on all the available stages of ambition. On the other hand, by refusing to do this, they lose in the very outset every point of advantage. In other words, adopting the English, they renounce the contest—*not* adopting it, they disqualify themselves for the contest. [Q.]

infancy into the first stage of maturity, and through the English colonies—African, Canadian, Indian, Australian—the English language (and, therefore, the English literature) is running forward towards its ultimate mission of eating up, like Aaron's rod, all other languages. Even the German and the Spanish will inevitably sink before it; perhaps within 100 or 150 years. In the recesses of California, in the vast solitudes of Australia, *The Churchyard amongst the Mountains*, from Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' and many a scene of his shorter poems, will be read, even as now Shakspeare is read amongst the forests of Canada. All which relates to the writer of these poems will then bear a value of the same kind as that which attaches to our personal memorials (unhappily so slender) of Shakspeare.

Let me now attempt to trace, in a brief outline, the chief incidents in the life of William Wordsworth, which are interesting, not only in virtue of their illustrious subject, but also as exhibiting a most remarkable (almost a providential) arrangement of circumstances, all tending to one result—that of insulating from worldly cares, and carrying onward from childhood to the grave, in a state of serene happiness, one who was unfitted for daily toil, and, at all events, who could not, under such demands upon his time and anxieties, have prosecuted those genial labours in which all mankind have an interest.

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, a small town of Cumberland, lying about a dozen miles to the north-west of Keswick, on the high road from that town to Whitehaven. His father was a solicitor, and acted as an agent for that Lord Lonsdale, the immediate predecessor of the present,¹ who is not unfrequently described by those who still remember him, as 'the bad Lord Lonsdale.' In what was he bad? Chiefly, I believe, in this—that, being a man of great local power, founded on his rank, on his official station of Lord-Lieutenant over two counties, and on a very large estate, he used his power at times in a most oppressive way. I have heard it said that he was mad; and, at any rate, he was inordinately capricious—capricious even to eccentricity. But, perhaps, his madness was nothing more than the

¹ 'The present':—This was written about 1835, when the present Earl of Lonsdale meant the late Earl. [Q.]

intemperance of a haughty and a headstrong will, encouraged by the consciousness of power, and tempted to abuses of it by the abject servility which poverty and dependence presented in one direction, embittering the contrast of that defiance which inevitably faced him in another, throughout a land of freedom and amongst spirits as haughty as his own. He was a true feudal chieftain; and, in the very approaches to his mansion, in the style of his equipage, or whatever else was likely to meet the public eye, he delighted to express his disdain of modern refinements, and the haughty carelessness of his magnificence. The coach in which he used to visit Penrith, the nearest town to his principal house of Lowther, was old and neglected; his horses fine, but untrimmed; and such was the impression diffused about him by his gloomy temper and his habits of oppression, that the streets were silent as he traversed them, and an awe sat upon many faces (so, at least, I have heard a Penrith contemporary of the old despot declare), pretty much like that which may be supposed to attend the entry into a guilty town of some royal commission for trying state criminals. In his park you saw some of the most magnificent timber in the kingdom—trees that were coeval with the feuds of York and Lancaster, yews that possibly had furnished bows to Cœur de Lion, and oaks that might have built a navy. All was savage grandeur about these native forests: their sweeping lawns and glades had been unapproached, for centuries it might be, by the hand of art; and amongst them roamed—not the timid fallow deer—but thundering droves of wild horses.

Lord Lonsdale went to London less frequently than else he might have done, because at home he was allowed to forget that in this world there was any greater man than himself. Even in London, however, his haughty injustice found occasions for making itself known. On a court day (I revive an anecdote once familiarly known), St. James's Street was lined by cavalry, and the orders were peremptory that no carriages should be allowed to pass, except those which were carrying parties to court. Whether it were by accident or by way of wilfully provoking such a collision, Lord Lonsdale's carriage advanced; and the coachman, in obedience to orders shouted out from the window, was turning down the forbidden route, when a trooper rode up to the horses' heads, and stopped them; the thundering menaces of

Lord Lonsdale perplexed the soldier, who did not know but he might be bringing himself into a scrape by persisting in his opposition; but the officer on duty, observing the scene, rode up, and, in a determined tone, enforced the order, causing two of his men to turn the horses' heads round into Piccadilly. Lord Lonsdale threw his card to the officer, and a duel followed; in which, however, the outrageous injustice of his lordship met with a pointed rebuke; for the first person whom he summoned to his aid, in the quality of second, though a friend, and, I believe, a relative of his own, declined to sanction by any interference so scandalous a quarrel with an officer for simply executing an official duty. In this dilemma (for probably he was aware that few military men would fail to take the same disapproving view of the affair) he applied to the present ¹ Earl of Lonsdale, then Sir William Lowther. Either there must have been some needless discourtesy in the officer's mode of fulfilling his duty, or else Sir William thought the necessity of the case, however wantonly provoked, a sufficient justification for a relative giving his assistance, even under circumstances of such egregious injustice. At any rate, it is due to Sir William, in mere candour, to suppose that he did nothing in this instance but what his conscience approved; seeing that in all others his conduct has been such as to win him the universal respect of the two counties in which he is best known. He it was that acted as second; and, by a will which is said to have been dated the same day, he became eventually possessed of a large property, which did not necessarily accompany the title.

Another anecdote is told of the same Lord Lonsdale, which expresses, in a more eccentric way, and a way that to many people will be affecting—to some shocking—the moody energy of his passions. He loved, with passionate fervour, a fine young woman, of humble parentage, in a Cumberland farmhouse. Her he had persuaded to leave her father, and put herself under his protection. Whilst yet young and beautiful, she died: Lord Lonsdale's sorrow was profound; he could not bear the thought of a final parting from that face which had become so familiar to his heart: he caused her to be embalmed; a glass was placed over her features; and at intervals, when his thoughts reverted to her

¹ Who must now (1854) be classed as the *late* Earl. [Q.]

memory, he found a consolation (or perhaps a luxurious irritation) of his sorrow in visiting this sad memorial of his former happiness. This story, which I have often heard repeated by the country-people of Cumberland, strengthened the general feeling of this eccentric nobleman's self-willed character, though in this instance complicated with a trait of character that argued nobler capacities. By what rules he guided himself in dealing with the various lawyers, agents, or stewards whom his extensive estates brought into a dependency upon his justice or his moderation—whether, in fact, he had no rule, but left all to accident or caprice—I have never learned. Generally, I have heard it said that in some years of his life he resisted the payment of all bills indiscriminately which he had any colourable plea for supposing to contain overcharges; some fared ill, because they were neighbours, and his lordship could say that 'he knew them to be knaves'; others fared worse, because they were so remote that 'how could his lordship know what they were?' Of this number, and possibly for this reason left unpaid, was Wordsworth's father. He died whilst his four sons and one daughter were yet helpless children, leaving to them respectable fortunes, but which, as yet, were unrealized and tolerably hypothetic, as they happened to depend upon so shadowy a basis as the justice of Lord Lonsdale. The executors of the will, and trustees of the children's interests, on one point acted wisely: foreseeing the result of a legal contest with so potent a defendant as this leviathan of two counties, and that, under any nominal award, the whole estate of the orphans might be swallowed up in the costs of any suit that should be carried into Chancery, they prudently withdrew from all active measures of opposition, confiding the event to Lord Lonsdale's returning sense of justice. Unfortunately for that nobleman's reputation, and also, as was thought, for the children's prosperity, before this somewhat rusty quality of justice could have time to operate, his lordship died.

However, for once the world was wrong in its malicious anticipations: the successor to Lord Lonsdale's titles and Cumberland states was made aware of the entire case, in all its circumstances; and he very honourably gave directions for full restitution being made. This was done; and in one respect the result was more fortunate for the children than if they had been trained from youth to rely upon their expectations: for, by the time this repayment

was made, three out of the five children were already settled in life, with the very amplest prospects opening before them—*so* ample as to make their private patrimonial fortunes of inconsiderable importance in their eyes; and very probably the withholding of their inheritance it was, however unjust, and however little contemplated as an occasion of any such effect, that urged these three persons to the exertions requisite for their present success. Two only of the children remained to whom the restoration of their patrimony was a matter of grave importance; but it was precisely those two whom no circumstances could have made independent of their hereditary means by personal exertions—viz. William Wordsworth, the poet, and Dorothy, the sole daughter of the house. The three others were:—Richard, the eldest: he had become a thriving solicitor, at one of the inns of court in London; and, if he died only moderately rich, and much below the expectations of his acquaintance, in the final result of his laborious life, it was because he was moderate in his desires, and, in his later years, reverting to the pastoral region of his infancy and boyhood, chose rather to sit down by a hearth of his own amongst the Cumberland mountains, and wisely to woo the deities of domestic pleasures and health, than to follow the chase after wealth in the feverish crowds of the capital. The third son (I believe) was Christopher (Dr. Wordsworth), who, at an early age, became a man of importance in the English Church, being made one of the chaplains and librarians of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Manners Sutton, father of the late Speaker, Lord Canterbury). He has since risen to the important and dignified station—once held by Barrow, and afterwards by Bentley—of Master of Trinity in Cambridge. Trinity in Oxford is not a first-rate college; but Trinity, Cambridge, answers in rank and authority to Christ Church in Oxford; and to be the head of that college is rightly considered a very splendid distinction.

Dr. Wordsworth has distinguished himself as an author by a very useful republication, entitled, 'Ecclesiastical Biography,' which he has enriched with valuable notes. And in his own person, besides other works more professional, he is the author of one very interesting work of historical research upon the difficult question of 'Who wrote the "Eicon Basilike"?' a question still unsettled, but much nearer to a settlement, in consequence of the

strong presumptions which Dr. Wordsworth has adduced on behalf of the King's claim.¹

The fourth and youngest son, John, was in the service of the East India Company, and perished most unhappily, at the very outset of the voyage which he had meant to be his last, off the coast of Dorsetshire, in the Company's ship *Abergavenny*. A calumny was current in some quarters, that Captain Wordsworth was in a state of intoxication at the time of the calamity. But the printed report of the affair, revised by survivors, entirely disproves this calumny; which, besides, was in itself incredible to all who were acquainted with Captain Wordsworth's most temperate and even philosophic habits of life. So peculiarly, indeed, was Captain Wordsworth's temperament, and the whole system of his life, coloured by a grave and meditative turn of thought, that amongst his brother officers in the Company's service he bore the surname of 'The Philosopher.' And William Wordsworth, the poet, not only always spoke of him with a sort of respect that argued him to have been no ordinary man, but he has frequently assured me of one fact which, as implying some want of sincerity in himself, gave me pain to hear—viz. that in the fine lines entitled 'The Happy Warrior,' reciting the main elements which enter into the composition of a hero, he had in view chiefly his brother

¹ '*Eicon Basilike*'.—By the way, in the lamented Eliot Warburton's 'Prince Rupert,' this book, by a very excusable mistake, is always cited as the '*Eicon Basilicon*': he was thinking of the '*Doron Basilicon*,' written by Charles's father: each of the nouns *Eicon* and *Doron*, having the same terminal syllable—*on*—it was most excusable to forget that the first belonged to an imparisyllabic declension, so as to be feminine, the second not so; which made it neuter. With respect to the great standing question as to the authorship of the work, I have myself always held that the natural freedom of judgment in this case has been intercepted by one strong prepossession (entirely false) from the very beginning. The minds of all people have been pre-occupied with the notion that Dr. Gauden, the reputed author, obtained his bishopric confessedly on the credit of that service. Lord Clarendon, it is said, who hated the Doctor, nevertheless gave him a bishopric, on the sole ground of his having written the '*Eicon*.' The inference therefore is that the Prime Minister, who gave so reluctantly, must have given under an irresistible weight of proof that the Doctor really had done the work for which so unwillingly he paid him. Any shade of doubt, such as could have justified Lord Clarendon in suspending this gift, would have been eagerly snatched at. Such a shade, therefore, there was not. Meantime the whole of this reasoning rests upon a false assumption: Dr. Gauden did *not* owe his bishopric to a belief (true or false) that he had written the '*Eicon*.' The bishopric was given on another account: consequently it cannot, in any way of using the fact, at all affect the presumptions, small or great, which may exist separately for or against the Doctor's claim on that head. [Q.]

John's character. That was true, I daresay, but it was inconsistent in some measure with the note attached to the lines, by which the reader learns that it was out of reverence for Lord Nelson, as one who transcended the estimate here made, that the poem had not been openly connected with his name, as the real suggester of the thoughts. Now, privately, though still professing a lively admiration for the mighty Admiral, as one of the few men who carried into his professional labours a real and vivid genius (and thus far Wordsworth often testified a deep admiration for Lord Nelson), yet, in reference to these particular lines, he uniformly declared that Lord Nelson was much below the ideal there contemplated, and that, in fact, it had been suggested by the recollection of his brother. But, if so, why should it have been dissembled? And surely, in some of the finest passages, this cannot be so; for example, when he makes it one trait of the heaven-born hero that he, if called upon to face some mighty day of trial—

‘To which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad, for human kind—
Is happy as a lover, and attired
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired’—

then, at least, he must have had Lord Nelson's idea predominating in his thoughts; for Captain Wordsworth was scarcely tried in such a situation. There can be no doubt, however, that he merited the praises of his brother; and it was indeed an idle tale that he should first of all deviate from this philosophic temperance upon an occasion where his utmost energies and the fullest self-possession were all likely to prove little enough. In reality it was the pilot, the incompetent pilot, who caused the fatal catastrophe: —‘O pilot, you have ruined me!’ were amongst the last words that Captain Wordsworth was heard to utter—pathetic words, and fit for him, ‘a meek man and a brave,’ to use in addressing a last reproach to one who, not through misfortune or overruling will of Providence, but through miserable conceit and unprincipled levity, had brought total ruin upon so many gallant countrymen. Captain Wordsworth might have saved his own life; but the perfect loyalty of his nature to the claims upon him, that sublime fidelity to duty which is so often found amongst men of his profession, kept him to the last upon the wreck; and, after *that*, it is probable that the almost total wreck of his own fortunes

(which, but for this overthrow, would have amounted to twenty thousand pounds, upon the successful termination of this one voyage), but still more the total ruin of the new and splendid Indianman confided to his care, had so much dejected his spirits that he was not in a condition for making such efforts as, under a more hopeful prospect, he might have been able to make. Six weeks his body lay unrecovered; at the end of that time, it was found, and carried to the Isle of Wight, and buried in close neighbourhood to the quiet fields which he had so recently described in letters to his sister at Grasmere as a Paradise of English peace, to which his mind would be likely oftentimes to revert amidst the agitations of the sea.

Such were the modes of life pursued by three of the orphan children: such the termination of life to the youngest. Meantime, the one daughter of the house was reared liberally, in the family of a relative at Windsor; * and she might have pursued a quiet and decorous career, of a character, perhaps, somewhat tame, under the same dignified auspices; but, at an early age, her good angel threw open to her a vista of nobler prospects, in the opportunity which then arose, and which she did not hesitate to seize, of becoming the companion, through a life of delightful wanderings—of what, to her more elevated friends, seemed little short of vagrancy—the companion and confidential friend, and, with a view to the enlargement of her own intellect, the pupil, of a brother, the most original and most meditative man of his own age.

William had passed his infancy on the very margin of the Lake district, just six miles, in fact, beyond the rocky screen of Whinlatter, and within one hour's ride of Bassenthwaite Water. To those who live in the tame scenery of Cockermouth, the blue mountains in the distance, the sublime peaks of Borrowdale and of Buttermere, raise aloft a signal, as it were, of a new country, a country of romance and mystery, to which the thoughts are habitually turning. Children are fascinated and haunted with vague temptations, when standing on the frontiers of such a foreign land; and so was Wordsworth fascinated, so haunted.

* After her mother's death, when Dorothy was six, she lived in Halifax, Penrith and Forncett. When she was twenty her Uncle Cookson was appointed a canon of Windsor and took her with his family for a three months' residence. That De Quincey should have got the impression that Dorothy grew up in society is perhaps indicative of the significance this episode of her life played in her thoughts and conversation.

Fortunate for Wordsworth that, at an early age, he was transferred to a quiet nook of this lovely district. At the little town of Hawkshead, seated on the north-west angle of Esthwaite Water, a grammar-school (which, in English usage, means a school for classical literature) was founded, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, by Archbishop Sandys, who belonged to the very ancient family of that name still seated in the neighbourhood. Hither were sent all the four brothers; and here it was that Wordsworth passed his life, from the age of nine until the time arrived for his removal to college. Taking into consideration the peculiar tastes of the person, and the peculiar advantages of the place, I conceive that no pupil of a public school can ever have passed a more luxurious boyhood than Wordsworth. The school discipline was not by many evidences very strict; the mode of living out of school very much resembled that of Eton for Oppidans; less elegant, no doubt, and less costly in its provisions for accommodation, but not less comfortable, and, in that part of the arrangements which was chiefly Etonian, even more so; for in both places the boys, instead of being gathered into one fold, and at night into one or two huge dormitories, were distributed amongst motherly old 'dames,' technically so called at Eton, but not at Hawkshead. In the latter place, agreeably to the inferior scale of the whole establishment, the houses were smaller, and more cottage-like, consequently more like private households: and the old lady of the *ménage* was more constantly amongst them, providing, with maternal tenderness and with a professional pride, for the comfort of her young flock, and protecting the weak from oppression. The humble cares to which these poor matrons dedicated themselves may be collected from several allusions scattered through the poems of Wordsworth; that entitled 'Nutting,' for instance, in which his own early Spinosistic feeling is introduced, of a mysterious presence diffused through the solitudes of woods, a presence that was disturbed by the intrusion of careless and noisy outrage, and which is brought into a strong relief by the previous homely picture of the old housewife equipping her young charge with beggar's weeds, in order to prepare him for a struggle with thorns and brambles. Indeed, not only the moderate rank of the boys, and the peculiar kind of relation assumed by these matrons, equally suggested this humble class of motherly attentions, but the whole spirit of the place and neighbourhood was favourable

to an old English homeliness of domestic and personal economy. Hawkshead, most fortunately for its own manners and the primitive style of its habits even to this day, stands about six miles out of the fashionable line for the 'Lakers.'

Esthwaite, though a lovely scene in its summer garniture of woods, has no features of permanent grandeur to rely upon. A wet or gloomy day, even in summer, reduces it to little more than a wildish pond, surrounded by miniature hills: and the sole circumstances which restore the sense of a romantic region and an Alpine character are the towering groups of Langdale and Grasmere fells, which look over the little pastoral barriers of Esthwaite, from distances of eight, ten, and fourteen miles. Esthwaite, therefore, being no object for itself, and the sublime head of Conistone being accessible by a road which evades Hawkshead, few tourists ever trouble the repose of this little village town. And in the days of which I am speaking (1778-1787) tourists were as yet few and infrequent to *any* parts of the country. Mrs. Radcliffe had not begun to cultivate the sense of the picturesque in her popular romances; guide-books, with the sole exception of 'Gray's Posthumous Letters,' had not arisen to direct public attention to this domestic Calabria; roads were rude, and, in many instances, not wide enough to admit post-chaises; but, above all, the whole system of travelling accommodation was barbarous and antediluvian for the requisitions of the pampered south. As yet the land had rest; the annual fever did not shake the very hills; and (which was the happiest immunity of the whole) false taste, the pseudo-romantic rage, had not violated the most awful solitudes amongst the ancient hills by opera-house decorations. Wordsworth, therefore, enjoyed this labyrinth of valleys in a perfection that no one can have experienced since the opening of the present century. The whole was one paradise of virgin beauty; the rare works of man, all over the land, were hoar with the grey tints of an antique picturesque; nothing was new, nothing was raw and uncitrized. Hawkshead, in particular, though tamely seated in itself and its immediate purlieus, has a most fortunate and central locality, as regards the best (at least the most interesting) scenes for a pedestrian Rambler. The gorgeous scenery of Borrowdale, the austere sublimities of Wastdalehead, of Langdalehead, or Mardale—these are too oppressive, in their colossal proportions and their utter solitudes,

for encouraging a perfectly human interest. Now, taking Hawkshead as a centre, with a radius of about eight miles, one might describe a little circular tract which embosoms a perfect network of little valleys—separate wards or cells, as it were, of one larger valley, walled in by the great leading mountains of the region. Grasmere, Easedale, Great and Little Langdale, Tilberthwaite, Yewdale, Elter Water, Loughrigg Tarn, Skelwith, and many other little quiet nooks, lie within a single division of this labyrinthine district. All these are within one summer afternoon's ramble. And amongst these, for the years of his boyhood, lay the daily excursions of Wordsworth.

I do not conceive that Wordsworth *could* have been an amiable boy; he was austere and unsocial, I have reason to think, in his habits; not generous; and not self-denying.* I am pretty certain that no consideration would ever have induced Wordsworth to burden himself with a lady's reticule, parasol, shawl, or anything exacting trouble and attention. Mighty must be the danger which would induce him to lead her horse by the bridle. Nor would he, without some demur, stop to offer her his hand over a stile. Freedom—unlimited, careless, insolent freedom—unoccupied possession of his own arms—absolute control over his own legs and motions—these have always been so essential to his comfort, that, in any case where they were likely to become questionable, he would have declined to make one of the party. Meantime, we are not to suppose that Wordsworth the boy expressly sought for solitary scenes of nature amongst woods and mountains with a direct conscious anticipation of imaginative pleasure, and loving them with a pure, disinterested love, on their own separate account. These are feelings beyond boyish nature, or, at all events, beyond boyish nature trained amidst the selfishness of social intercourse. Wordsworth, like his companions, haunted the hills and the vales for the sake of angling, snaring birds, swimming, and sometimes of hunting, according to the Westmoreland fashion (or the Irish fashion in Galway), on foot; for riding to the chase is quite impossible, from the precipitous nature of the ground. It was in the course of these pursuits, by an indirect effect

* *Tait's* continues: 'Throughout his later life, with all the benefits of a French discipline in the lesser charities of social intercourse, he has always exhibited a marked impatience of those particular courtesies of life. Not but he was kind and obliging where his services would cost him no exertion; but I am . . .'

growing gradually upon him, that Wordsworth became a passionate lover of nature, at the time when the growth of his intellectual faculties made it possible that he should combine those thoughtful passions with the experience of the eye and the ear.*

* *Tait's* continues: 'There is, amongst the poems of Wordsworth, one most ludicrously misconstrued by his critics, which offers a philosophical hint upon this subject, of great instruction. I will preface it with the little incident which first led Wordsworth into a commentary upon his own meaning. One night, as often enough happened, during the Peninsular war, he and I had walked up Dunmail Raise, from Grasmere, about midnight, in order to meet the carrier who brought the London newspapers, by a circuitous course from Keswick. The case was this:— Coleridge, for many years, received a copy of the *Courier*, as a mark of esteem, and in acknowledgment of his many contributions to it, from one of the proprietors, Mr. Daniel Stewart. This went up in any case, let Coleridge be where he might, to Mrs. Coleridge, for a single day, it staid at Keswick, for the use of Southey, and, on the next, it came on to Wordsworth, by the slow conveyance of a carrier, plying with a long train of carts between Whitehaven and Kendal. Many a time the force of storms or floods would compel the carrier to stop on his route, five miles short of Grasmere, at Wythburn, or even eight miles short, at Legberthwaite. But, as there was always hope until one or two o'clock in the morning, often and often it would happen that, in the deadly impatience for earlier intelligence, Wordsworth and I would walk off to meet him about midnight, to a distance of three or four miles. Upon one of these occasions, when some great crisis in Spain was daily apprehended, we had waited for an hour or more, sitting upon one of the many huge blocks of stone which lie scattered over that narrow field of battle on the desolate frontier of Cumberland and Westmoreland, where King Dun Mail, with all his peerage, fell, more than a thousand years ago. The time had arrived, at length, that all hope for that night had left us; no sound came up through the winding valleys that stretched to the north; and the few cottage lights, gleaming at wide distances, from recesses among the rocky hills, had long been extinct. At intervals, Wordsworth had stretched himself at length on the high road, applying his ear to the ground, so as to catch any sound of wheels that might be groaning along at a distance. Once, when he was slowly rising from this effort his eye caught a bright star that was glittering between the brow of Seat Sandal and of the mighty Helvellyn. He gazed upon it for a minute or so; and then, upon turning away to descend into Grasmere, he made the following explanation:—"I have remarked, from my earliest days, that, if under any circumstance the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances. Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come down upon the lake of Wythburn from the Keswick road; at the very instant when I raised my head from the ground, in final abandonment of hope for this night, at the very instance when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star hanging in the air above those outlines of massy blackness fell suddenly upon my eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the infinite, that would not have arrested me under other circumstances." He then went on to illustrate the

same psychological principle from another instance; it was an instance derived from that exquisite poem in which he describes a mountain boy planting himself at twilight on the margin of some solitary bay of Windermere, and provoking the owls to a contest with himself, by "mimic hootings" blown through his hands; which of itself becomes an impressive scene to any one able to realize to his fancy the various elements of the solitary woods and waters, the solemn vesper hour, the solitary bird, the solitary boy. Afterwards, the poem goes on to describe the boy as waiting, amidst "the pauses of his skill," for the answers of the birds—waiting with intensity of expectation—and then, at length, when, after waiting to no purpose, his attention began to relax—that is, in other words, under the giving way of one exclusive direction of his senses, began suddenly to allow an admission to other objects—then, in that instant, the scene actually before him, the visible scene, would enter unawares:

"With all its solemn imagery"—

This complex scenery was—What?

"Was carried *far* into his heart

With all its pomp, and that uncertain heav'n received
Into the bosom of the steady lake."

'This very expression, "far," by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation. On this, however, Wordsworth did not say anything in his commentary; nor did he notice the conclusion, which is this. After describing the efforts of the boy, and next the passive state which succeeded, under his disappointment, (in which condition it was that the solemn spectacle entered the boy's mind with effectual power, and with a semi-conscious sense of its beauty that would not be denied,) the poet goes on to say—

"And I suppose that I have stood

A full half-hour beside his quiet grave,

Mute—for he died when he was ten years old."

'Wherefore, then, did the poet stand in the village churchyard of Hawkshead, wrapt in a trance of reverie, over the grave of this particular boy? "It was," says Lord Jeffrey, "for that single accomplishment"—viz., the accomplishment of mimicking the Windermere owls so well that not men only—Coleridge, for instance, or Professor Wilson, or other connoisseurs of owl-music—might have been hoaxed, but actually the old birds themselves, grave as they seem, were effectually humbugged into entering upon a sentimental correspondence of love or friendship—almost regularly "duplying," "replying," and "quadrupling," (as Scotch law calls it,) to the boy's original theme. But here, in this solution of Lord Jeffrey's, there is, at all events, a dismal oversight, for it is evident to the most careless reader that the very object of the poem is not the first or initial stage of the boy's history—the exercise of skill which led him, as an occasion, into a rigid and tense effort of attention—not this, but the second stage, the consequence of that attention. Even the attention was an effect, a derivative state; but the second stage, upon which the poet fixed his object, is an effect of that effect; and it is clear that the original notice of the boy's talent is introduced only as a *conditio sine qua non*—a notice without which particular result (namely, the tense attention of expectation) could not have been made intelligible; as, again, without this result being noticed, the reaction of that action could quite as little have been made intelligible. Else, and but for this conditional and derivative necessity, but for this dependency of the essential circumstance upon the boy's power of mimicry, it is evident that the "accomplishment"—

which Lord Jeffrey so strangely supposes to have been the main object of the poet in recording the boy, and the main subject of his reverie by the side of his grave—never would have been noticed. It is difficult, indeed, to conceive a stronger evidence of that incoherency of thought under which Lord Jeffrey must have allowed himself to read Wordsworth than this very blunder. But, leaving his Lordship, what *was* the subject of the poet's reverie? some reader may say. A poem ought to explain itself, and we cannot for a moment admit, as a justifying subject for reverie, any private knowledge which the poet might happen to have of the boy's character, or of the expectations he had chanced to raise among his friends. I will endeavour to say a word on this question; but, that I may not too much interrupt the narration, in a note. At the same time, let me remind the reader of one great and undeniable truth: It is a fact which cannot be controverted, except by the very thoughtless and the very unobserving, that scarcely one in a thousand of impassioned cases, scarcely one effect in a thousand of all the memorable effects produced by poets, can, upon any theories yet received amongst us, be even imperfectly explained. And, especially, this is true of original poetry. The cases are past numbering in which the understanding says, or seems to say, one thing, impassioned nature another, and, in poetry, at least, Cicero's great rule will be found to fail— that "*numquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicit*;" if, at least, we understand *sapientia* to mean dispassionate good sense. How, for instance, could plain good sense—how could the very finest understanding—have told any man, beforehand, that love in excess, amongst its other modes of waywardness, was capable of prompting such appellations as that of "wretch" to the beloved object? Yet, as a fact, as an absolute fact of the experience, it is undeniable that it is among the impulses of love, in extremity, to clothe itself in the language of disparagement—*why*, is yet to be explained.

"Perhaps 'tis pretty
To mutter and mock a broken charm;
To dally with wrong that does no harm,
Perhaps 'tis pretty to tie together
Thoughts so all unlike each other,
To feel, at each wild word, within,
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what if, in a world of sin"—&c. &c.

'That is Coleridge's solution; and the amount of it is—first, that it is delightful to call up what we know to be a mere mimicry of evil, in order to feel its non-reality; to dally with phantoms of pain that do not exist: secondly, that such language acts by way of *contrast*, making the love more prominent by the contradictoriness of its expression: thirdly, that in a world of sin, where evil passions are so often called into action, and have thus matured the language of violence in a service of malignity, naturally enough the feeling of violence and excess stumbles into its old forms of expression, even when the excess happens to lie in the very opposite direction. All this seems specious, and is undoubtedly some part of the solution; and the verses are so fancifully beautiful, that they would recommend even a worse philosophy. But, after all, I doubt if the whole philosophy be given: and, in a similar attempt of Charles Lamb's, the case is not so much solved as further illustrated and amplified. Finally, if solved completely, this case is but one of multitudes which are furnished by the English drama: but (and I would desire no better test of the essential inferiority attaching to the French drama—no better argument of its having grown out of a radically lower nature) there is not, from first to last, throughout that vaunted field of the French literature, one case of what I may denominate the antinomies

of passion—cases of self-conflict, in which the understanding says one thing, the impassioned nature of man says another thing. This is a great theme, however, and I dismiss it to a separate discussion.

'So far, however, as I have here noticed it, this question has arisen naturally out of the account, as I was endeavouring to sketch it, of Wordsworth's attachment to nature in her grandest forms. It grew out of solitude and the character of his own mind; but the mode of its growth was indirect and unconscious, and in the midst of other more boyish or more worldly pursuits; and that which happened to the boy in mimicking the owls happened also to him. In moments of watching for the passage of woodcocks over the hills in moonlight nights, in order that he might snare them, oftentimes the dull gaze of expectation, after it was becoming hopeless, left him liable to effects of mountain scenery under accidents of nightly silence and solitude, which impressed themselves with a depth for which a full tide of success would have allowed no opening. And, as he lived and grew amongst such scenes from childhood to manhood, many thousands of such opportunities had leisure to improve themselves into permanent effects of character, of feeling, and of taste. Like Michael, he was in the heart of many thousand mists. Many a sight, moreover, such as meets the eye rarely of any, except those who haunt the hills and the tarns at all hours,** and all seasons of the year, had been seen, and neglected perhaps at the time, but afterwards revisited the eye and produced its appropriate effect in silent hours of meditation. In everything, perhaps, except in the redundant graciousness of heart which formed so eminent a feature in the moral constitution of that true philosopher; the character, the sensibility, and the taste of Wordsworth, pursued the same course of development as in the education of the Scotch Pedler †† who gives so much of the movement to the progress of "The Excursion"

** 'In particular, and by way of giving an illustration, let me here mention one of those accidental revelations that unfold new aspects of nature: it was one that occurred to myself. I had gone up at all times of the morning and the year, to an eminence, or rather, a vast field of eminences, above Scor Crag, in the rear of Allan Bank, a Liverpool gentleman's mansion, from which is descried the deep and gloomy valley of Great Langdale. Not, however, for many years, had it happened that I found myself standing in that situation about four o'clock on a summer afternoon. At length, and on a favourable day, this accident occurred; and the scene which I then beheld, was one which I shall not wholly forget to my dying day. The effects arose from the position of the sun and of the spectator, taken in connexion with a pendulous mass of vapour, in which, however, were many rents and openings, and through them, far below, at an abyss-like depth, was seen the gloomy valley, its rare cottages, and "unrejoicing" fir-trees. I had beheld the scene many times before, I was familiar with its least-important features, but now, it was absolutely transfigured, it was seen under lights and mighty shadows that made it no less marvellous to the eye than that memorable creation amongst the clouds and azure sky, which is described by the Solitary in "The Excursion." And, upon speaking of it to Wordsworth, I found that he had repeatedly witnessed the same impressive transfiguration; so that it is not evanescent, but dependent upon fixed and recoverable combinations of time and weather.'

†† 'Amongst the various attempts to justify Wordsworth's choice of so humble and even mean an occupation for his philosopher, how strange that the weightiest argument of all should have been omitted—viz., the privilege attached to his functions of penetrating without offence, and naturally, and at periodic intervals, to every fireside.'

One of the most interesting among the winter amusements of the Hawkshead boys was that of skating on the adjacent lake. Esthwaite Water is not one of the deep lakes, as its neighbours of Windermere, Coniston, and Grasmere are; consequently, a very slight duration of frost is sufficient to freeze it into a bearing strength. In this respect Wordsworth found the same advantages in his boyhood as afterwards at the University; for the county of Cambridge is generally liable to shallow waters; and that University breeds more good skaters than all the rest of England. About the year 1810, by way of expressing an interest in 'The Friend,' which was just at that time appearing in weekly numbers, Wordsworth allowed Coleridge to print an extract from the poem on his own life, descriptive of the games celebrated upon the ice of Esthwaite by all who were able to skate: the mimic chases of hare and hounds, pursued long after the last orange gleam of light had died away from the western horizon—oftentimes far into the night; a circumstance which does not speak much for the discipline of the schools, or rather, perhaps, *does* speak much for the advantages of a situation so pure, and free from the usual perils of a town, as could allow of a discipline so lax. Wordsworth, in this fine descriptive passage—which I wish that I had at this moment the means of citing, in order to amplify my account of his earliest tyrocinium—speaks of himself as frequently wheeling aside from his joyous companions to cut across the image of a star; and thus, already in the midst of sportiveness, and by a movement of sportiveness, half unconsciously to himself expressing the growing necessity of retirement to his habits of thought. At another period of the year, when the golden summer allowed the students a long season of early play before the studies of the day began, he describes himself as roaming, hand-in-hand, with one companion, along the banks of Esthwaite Water, chanting, with one voice, the verses of Goldsmith and of Gray—verses which, at the time of recording the fact, he had come to look upon as either in parts false in the principles of their composition, or, at any rate, as far below the tone of high poetic passion; but which, at that time of life, when the profounder feelings were as yet only germinating, filled them with an enthusiasm

'More bright than madness and the dreams of wine.'

Meanwhile, how prospered the classical studies which formed

the main business of Wordsworth at Hawkshead? Not, in all probability, very well; for, though Wordsworth finally became a very sufficient master of the Latin language, and read certain favourite authors, especially Horace, with a critical nicety, and with a feeling for the felicities of his composition, I have reason to think that little of this skill had been obtained at Hawkshead. As to Greek, that is a language which Wordsworth never had energy enough to cultivate with effect.

From Hawkshead, and, I believe, after he had entered his eighteenth year (a time which is tolerably early on the English plan), probably at the latter end of the year 1787, Wordsworth entered at St. John's College, Cambridge. St. John's ranks as the second college in Cambridge—the second as to numbers, and influence, and general consideration; in the estimation of the Johnnians as the first, or at least as co-equal in all things with Trinity; from which, at any rate, the general reader will collect that no such absolute supremacy is accorded to any society in Cambridge as in Oxford is accorded necessarily to Christ Church. The advantages of a large college are considerable, both to the idle man, who wishes to lurk unnoticed in the crowd, and to the brilliant man, whose vanity could not be gratified by pre-eminence amongst a few. Wordsworth, though not idle as regarded his own pursuits, was so as regarded the pursuits of the place. With respect to them he felt—to use his own words—that his hour was not come; and that his doom for the present was a happy obscurity, which left him, unvexed by the torments of competition, to the genial enjoyment of life in its most genial hours.

It will excite some astonishment when I mention that, on coming to Cambridge, Wordsworth actually assumed the beau, or, in modern slang, the 'dandy.' He dressed in silk stockings, had his hair powdered, and in all things plumed himself on his gentlemanly habits. To those who remember the slovenly dress of his middle and philosophic life, this will furnish matter for a smile.

Stranger still it is to tell that, for the first time in his life, Wordsworth became inebriated * at Cambridge. It is but fair to add that the first time was also the last time. But perhaps the strangest part of the story is the occasion of this drunkenness; which was in

* *Tait's* reads: 'got "bouzy"'.†

celebration of his first visit to the very rooms at Christ College once occupied by Milton—intoxication by way of homage to the most temperate of men; and this homage offered by one who has turned out himself to the full as temperate! Every man, meantime, who is not a churl, must grant a privilege and charter of large enthusiasm to such an occasion. And an older man than Wordsworth (at that era not fully nineteen), and a man even without a poet's blood in his veins, might have leave to forget his sobriety in such circumstances. Besides which, after all, I have heard from Wordsworth's own lips that he was not too far gone to attend chapel decorously during the very acmé of his elevation.

The rooms which Wordsworth occupied at St. John's were singularly circumstanced; mementoes of what is highest and what is lowest in human beings solicited the eye and the ear all day long. If the occupant approached the outdoors prospect, in one direction, there was visible, through the great windows in the adjacent chapel of Trinity, the statue of Newton 'with his silent face and prism,' memorials of the abstracting intellect, serene and absolute, emancipated from fleshly bonds. On the other hand, immediately below, stood the college kitchen; and, in that region, 'from noon to dewy eve,' resounded the shrill voice of scolding from the female ministers of the head cook, never suffering the mind to forget one of the meanest amongst human necessities. Wordsworth, however, as one who passed much of his time in social gaiety, was less in the way of this annoyance than a profounder student would have been. Probably he studied little beyond French and Italian during his Cambridge life; not, however, at any time forgetting (as I had so much reason to complain, when speaking of my Oxonian contemporaries) the literature of his own country. It is true that he took the regular degree of A.B., and in the regular course; but this was won in those days by a mere nominal examination, unless where the mathematical attainments of the student prompted his ambition to contest the splendid distinction of Senior Wrangler. This, in common with all other honours of the University, is won in our days with far severer effort than in that age of relaxed discipline; but at no period could it have been won, let the malicious say what they will, without an amount of mathematical skill very much beyond what has ever been exacted of its *alumni* by any other European University. Wordsworth was a profound admirer of the sublimer

mathematics; at least of the higher geometry. The secret of this admiration for geometry lay in the antagonism between this world of bodiless abstraction and the world of passion. And here I may mention appropriately, and I hope without any breach of confidence, that, in a great philosophic poem of Wordsworth's, which is still in MS., and will remain in MS. until after his death,* there is, at the opening of one of the books, a dream, which reaches the very *ne plus ultra* of sublimity, in my opinion, expressly framed to illustrate the eternity, and the independence of all social modes or fashions of existence, conceded to these two hemispheres, as it were, that compose the total world of human power—mathematics on the one hand, poetry on the other.

I scarcely know whether I am entitled to quote—as my memory (though not refreshed by a sight of the poem for more than twenty years) would well enable me to do—any long extract; but thus much I may allowably say, as it cannot in any way affect Mr. Wordsworth's interests, that the form of the dream is as follows; and, by the way, even this form is not arbitrary; but, with exquisite skill in the art of composition, is made to arise out of the situation in which the poet had previously found himself, and is faintly prefigured in the elements of that situation. He had been reading 'Don Quixote' by the sea-side; and, oppressed by the heat of the sun, he had fallen asleep, whilst gazing on the barren sands before him. Even in these circumstances of the case—as, first, the adventurous and half-lunatic knight riding about the world, on missions of universal philanthropy, and, secondly, the barren sands of the sea-shore—one may read the germinal principles of the dream. He dreams that, walking in some sandy wilderness of Africa, some endless Zahara, he sees at a distance

'An Arab of the desert, lance in rest,
Mounted upon a dromedary.'

The Arab rides forward to meet him; and the dreamer perceives, in the countenance of the rider, the agitation of fear, and that he often looks behind him in a troubled way, whilst in his hand he holds two books—one of which is 'Euclid's Elements'; the other

* De Quincey is referring to *The Prelude*, first published in 1850. His quotations, although inaccurate, are recognizably from the 1805 text of the poem.

(which is a book and yet not a book) seeming, in fact, a shell as well as a book—seeming neither, and yet both at once. The Arab directs him to apply the shell to his ear; upon which,

‘In an unknown tongue, which yet I understood,’

the dreamer says that he heard

‘A wild prophetic blast of harmony,
An ode, as if in passion utter’d, that foretold
Destruction to the people of this earth
By deluge near at hand.’

The Arab, with grave countenance, assures him that it is even so; that all was true which had been said; and that he himself was riding upon a divine mission, having it in charge

‘To bury those two books;
The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
. . . undisturb’d by Space or Time;
The other, that was a god, yea, many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, and was
A joy, a consolation, and a hope!’

That is, in effect, his mission is to secure the two great interests of poetry and mathematics from sharing in the watery ruin. As he talks, suddenly the dreamer perceives that the Arab’s ‘countenance grew more disturbed,’ and that his eye was often reverted; upon which the dreaming poet also looks along the desert in the same direction; and in the far horizon he descries ‘a glittering light.’ What is it? he asks of the Arab rider. ‘It is,’ said the Arab, ‘the waters of the earth,’ that even then were travelling on their awful errand. Upon which, the poet sees this apostle of the desert riding

‘Hurrying o’er the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him: whereat I [meaning the poet] waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book
In which I had been reading at my side.’

The sketch I have here given of this sublime dream sufficiently attests the interest which Wordsworth took in the mathematic studies of the place, and the exalted privilege which he ascribed

to them of co-eternity with 'the vision and the faculty divine' of the poet—the destiny common to both, of an endless triumph over the ruins of nature and of time. Meantime, he himself travelled no farther in these studies than through the six elementary books usually selected from the fifteen of Euclid. Whatever might be the interests of his speculative understanding, whatever his admiration, practically he devoted himself to the more agitating interests of man, social and political, just then commencing that vast career of revolution which has never since been still or stationary; interests which in his mind alternated, nevertheless, with another and different interest, in the grander forms of external nature, as found amongst mountains and forests. In obedience to this latter passion it was—for a passion it had become—that during one of his long Cambridge vacations, stretching from June to November, he went over to Switzerland and Savoy, for a pedestrian excursion amongst the Alps; taking with him for his travelling companion a certain Mr. J——, of whom (excepting that he is once apostrophized in a sonnet, written at Calais in the year 1802) I never happened to hear him speak: whence I presume to infer that Mr. J—— owed this flattering distinction, not so much to any intellectual graces of his society, as, perhaps, to his powers of administering 'punishment' (in the language of the 'fancy') to restive and mutinous landlords; for such were abroad in those days,—people who presented huge reckonings with one hand, and with the other a huge cudgel, by way of opening the traveller's eyes to the propriety of settling them without demur, and without discount. I do not positively know this to have been the case; but I have heard Wordsworth speak of the ruffian landlords who played upon his youth in the Grisons; and, however well qualified to fight his own battles, he might find, amongst such savage mountaineers, two combatants better than one.*

Wordsworth's route, on this occasion, lay at first through Austrian Flanders, then (1788, I think) on the fret for an insurrectionary war against the capricious innovations of the imperial coxcomb, Joseph II. He passed through the camps then forming,

* Wordsworth made this walking tour during his last long vacation, from 10th July to 10th October 1790. His companion was Robert Jones, who later became a clergyman and with whom Wordsworth remained on affectionate terms.

and thence ascended the Rhine to Switzerland; crossed the Great St. Bernard, visited the Lake of Como, and other interesting scenes in the north of Italy, where, by the way, the tourists were benighted in a forest—having, in some way or other, been misled by the Italian clocks and their peculiar fashion of striking round to twenty-four o'clock. On his return, Wordsworth published a quarto pamphlet of verses, describing, with very considerable effect and brilliancy, the grand scenery amongst which he had been moving. This poem, as well as another in the same quarto form, describing the English lake scenery of Westmoreland and Cumberland, addressed by way of letter 'to a young lady' (viz., Miss Wordsworth), are remarkable, in the first place, as the earliest effort of Wordsworth in verse, at least as his earliest publication; but, in the second place, and still more so, from their style of composition.* 'Pure description,' even where it cannot be said, sneeringly, 'to hold the place of sense,' is so little attractive as the direct exclusive object of a poem, and in reality it exacts so powerful an effort on the part of the reader to realize visually, or make into an apprehensible unity, the scattered elements and circumstances of external landscapes painted only by words, that, inevitably, and reasonably, it can never hope to be a popular form of composition; else it is highly probable that these 'Descriptive Sketches' of Wordsworth, though afterwards condemned as vicious in their principles of composition by his own maturer taste, would really have gained him a high momentary notoriety with the public, had they been fairly brought under its notice; whilst, on the other hand, his revolutionary principles of composition, and his purer taste, ended in obtaining for him nothing but scorn and ruffian insolence. This seems marvellous; but, in fact, it is not so: it seems, I mean, *prima facie*, marvellous that the inferior models should be fitted to gain a far higher reputation; but the secret lies here—that these were in a style of composition which, if sometimes false, had been long reconciled to the public feelings, and which, besides, have a specific charm for certain minds, even apart from all fashions of the day;

* The two poems referred to are 'Descriptive Sketches . . . during a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison Swiss and Savoyard Alps' and 'An Evening Walk. An Epistle; in Verse'. Both were published in London in 1793. De Quincey has confused Wordsworth's walking tour with Jones with his much longer stay in France from November 1791 until December 1792, upon returning from which he published these two poems.

whereas, his later poems had to struggle against sympathies long trained in an opposite direction, to which the recovery of a healthier tone (even where nature had made it possible) presupposed a difficult process of weaning, and an effort of discipline for re-organizing the whole internal economy of the sensibilities that is both painful and mortifying: for—and that is worthy of deep attention—the misgivings of any vicious or unhealthy state, the impulses and suspicious gleams of the truth struggling with cherished error, the instincts of light conflicting with darkness—these are the real causes of that hatred and intolerant scorn which is ever awakened by the first dawnings of new and important systems of truth. Therefore it is, that Christianity was so much more hated than any mere variety of error. Therefore are the first feeble struggles of nature towards a sounder state of health always harsh and painful; for the false system which this change for the better disturbs had, at least, this soothing advantage—that it was self-consistent. Therefore, also, was the Wordsworthian restoration of elementary power, and of a higher or transcendent truth of nature (or, as some people vaguely expressed the case, of *simplicity*), received at first with such malignant disgust. For there was a galvanic awakening in the shock of power, as it jarred against the ancient system of prejudices, which inevitably revealed so much of truth as made the mind jealous; enlightened it enough to descry its own wanderings, but not enough to recover the right road. The more energetic, the more spasmodically potent, are the throes of nature towards her own re-establishment in the cases of suspended animation—by drowning, strangling, etc.—the more keen is the anguish of revival. And, universally, a transition state is a state of suffering and disquiet. Meantime, the early poems of Wordsworth, that *might* have suited the public taste so much better than his more serious efforts, if the fashion of the hour, or the sanction of a leading review, or the *prestige* of a name, had happened to bring them under the public eye, did, in fact, drop unnoticed into the market. Nowhere have I seen them quoted—no, not even since the author's victorious establishment in the public admiration. The reason may be, however, that not many copies were printed at first; no subsequent edition was ever called for; and yet, from growing interest in the author, every copy of the small impression had been studiously bought up. Indeed, I myself went to the publisher's (Johnson's) as early as 1805 or

1806, and bought up all the remaining copies (which were but six or seven of the *Foreign Sketches*, and two or three of the *English*), as presents, and as *future* curiosities in literature to literary friends whose interest in Wordsworth might assure one of a due value being put upon the poems. Were it not for this extreme scarcity, I am disposed to think that many lines or passages would long ere this have been made familiar to the public ear. Some are delicately, some forcibly picturesque; and the selection of circumstances is occasionally very original and felicitous. In particular, I remember this one, which presents an accident in rural life that must by thousands of repetitions have become intimately known to every dweller in the country, and yet had never before been consciously taken up for a poet's use. After having described the domestic cock as 'sweetly ferocious'—a prettiness of phraseology which he borrows from an Italian author—he notices those competitions or defiances which are so often carried on interchangeably between barn-door cocks from great distances—

'Echoed by faintly answering farms remote.'

This is the beautiful line in which he has caught and preserved so ordinary an occurrence—one, in fact, of the commonplaces which lend animation and a moral interest to rural life.

After his return from this Swiss excursion, Wordsworth took up his parting residence at Cambridge, and prepared for a final adieu to academic pursuits and academic society.

It was about this period that the French Revolution broke out; and the reader who would understand its appalling effects—its convulsing, revolutionary effects upon Wordsworth's heart and soul—should consult the history of the *Solitary*, as given by himself in 'The Excursion'; for that picture is undoubtedly a leaf from the personal experience of Wordsworth—

'From that dejection I was roused—but how?'

Mighty was the transformation which it wrought in the whole economy of his thoughts; miraculous almost was the expansion which it gave to his human sympathies; chiefly in this it showed its effects—in throwing the thoughts inwards into grand meditations upon man, his final destiny, his ultimate capacities of elevation; and, secondly, in giving to the whole system of the thoughts and feelings a firmer tone, and a sense of the awful

realities which surround the mind; by comparison with which the previous literary tastes seemed (even where they were fine and elegant, as in Collins or Gray, unless where they had the self-sufficing reality of religion, as in Cowper) fanciful and trivial. In all lands this result was accomplished, and at the same time: Germany, above all, found her new literature the mere creation and rebound of this great moral tempest; and, in Germany or England alike, the poetry was so entirely regenerated, thrown into moulds of thought and of feeling so new, that the poets everywhere felt themselves to be putting away childish things, and now first, among those of their own century, entering upon the dignity and the sincere thinking of mature manhood.

Wordsworth, it is well known to all who know anything of his history, felt himself so fascinated by the gorgeous festival era of the Revolution—that era when the sleeping snakes which afterwards stung the national felicity were yet covered with flowers—that he went over to Paris, and spent about one entire year between that city, Orleans, and Blois. There, in fact, he continued to reside almost too long. He had been sufficiently connected with public men to have drawn upon himself some notice from those who afterwards composed the Committee of Public Safety. And, as an Englishman, when that partiality began to droop which at an earlier period had protected the English name, he became an object of gloomy suspicion with those even who would have grieved that he should fall a victim to undistinguishing popular violence. Already *for* England, and in her behalf, he was thought to be that spy which (as Coleridge tells us in his ‘*Biographia Literaria*’) afterwards he was accounted by Mr. Pitt’s emissaries, in the worst of services *against* her. I doubt, however (let me say it without impeachment of Coleridge’s veracity—for he was easily duped), this whole story about Mr. Pitt’s Somersetshire spies; and it has often struck me with astonishment that Coleridge should have suffered his personal pride to take so false a direction as to court the humble distinction of having been suspected as a conspirator, in those very years when poor empty tympanies of men, such as Thelwall, Holcroft, etc., were actually recognized as enemies of the state, and worthy of a state surveillance, by ministers so blind and grossly misinformed as, on this point, were Pitt and Dundas. Had I been Coleridge, instead of saving Mr. Pitt’s reputation with posterity, by ascribing to him a jealousy

which he or his agents had not the discernment to cherish, I would have boldly planted myself upon the fact, the killing fact, that he had utterly ignored both myself (Coleridge, to wit) and Wordsworth. Even with Dogberry, I would have insisted upon that—'Set down, also, that I am an ass!' * Clamorous should have been my exultation in this fact.¹

In France, however, Wordsworth had a chance, in good earnest, of passing for the traitor that, in England, no rational person ever thought him. He had chosen his friends carelessly; nor could any man, the most sagacious, have chosen them safely,

¹ The reader, who may happen not to have seen Coleridge's 'Biographia Literaria,' is informed that Coleridge tells a long story about a man who followed and dogged himself and Wordsworth in all their rural excursions, under a commission (originally emanating from Mr. Pitt) for detecting some overt acts of treason, or treasonable correspondence, or, in default of either, some words of treasonable conversation. Unfortunately for his own interests as an active servant, even in a whole month that spy had collected nothing at all as the basis of a report, excepting only something which they (Coleridge and Wordsworth, to wit) were continually saying to each other, now in blame, now in praise, of one *Spy Novy*; and this, praise and blame alike, the honest spy very naturally took to himself, seeing that the world accused him of having a *nose* of unreasonable dimensions, and his own conscience accused him of being a spy. 'Now' says Coleridge, 'the very fact was that Wordsworth and I were constantly talking about Spinoza.' This story makes a very good Joe Miller; but, for other purposes, is somewhat damaged. However, there is one excellent story in the case. Some country gentleman from the neighbourhood of Nether Stowey, upon a party happening to discuss the probabilities that Wordsworth and Coleridge might be traitors, and in correspondence with the French Directory, answered thus:—'Oh, as to that Coleridge, he's a rattlebrain, that will say more in a week than he will stand to in a twelvemonth. But Wordsworth—that's the traitor, why, bless you, he's so close, that you'll never hear him open his lips on the subject from year's end to year's end' [Q.]

* *Tair's* continues: 'I would have exulted in this fact; it should have been my glory—namely, that two men, whom, in their intellectual faculties, posterity will acknowledge as equal to any age, were scorned and slighted as too contemptible for fear; whilst others, so gross and vulgar in style of mind as this Holcroft, this Thelwall, this—(what is his name?)—were as brainlessly feared by Mr. Pitt's cabinet as ever Bottom was adored by Titania. What a perversion of pride! that Coleridge should have sought by lending his ear to fables which Wordsworth's far sterner principles views as lies, to gain the fanciful honour of standing upon Mr. Pitt's pocket list of traitors and French spies; when, after all, they stood confessedly in that list as tenth-rate and most inconsiderable villains. Heavens! that was a strange ambition, that, rather than be wholly forgotten by Mr. Pitt, (in which fate there was, by possibility, a great dignity,) would seek to figure amongst the very rear-guard of his traitors!' [De Quincey was mistaken. Files of the Home Office reveal that the neighbours, becoming suspicious of the strangers who carried around camp stools and wrote in portfolios, alerted the Home Secretary, who sent down an investigator.]

in a time when the internal schisms of the very same general party brought with them worse hostilities and more personal perils than even, upon the broader divisions of party, could have attended the most *ultra* professions of anti-national politics, and when the rapid changes of position shifted the peril from month to month. One individual is especially recorded by Wordsworth, in the poem on his own life, as a man of the highest merit, and personal qualities the most brilliant, who ranked first upon the list of Wordsworth's friends; and this man was so far a safe friend, at one moment, as he was a republican general—finally, indeed, a commander-in-chief. This was Beaupuis; and the description of his character and position is singularly interesting. There is, in fact, a special value and a use about the case; it opens one's eyes feelingly to the fact that, even in this thoughtless people, so full of vanity and levity, nevertheless, the awful temper of the times, and the dread burden of human interests with which it was charged, had called to a consciousness of new duties, had summoned to an audit, as if at some great final tribunal, even the gay, radiant creatures that, under less solemn auspices, under the reign of a Francis I. or a Louis XIV., would have been the merest painted butterflies of the court sunshine. This Beaupuis was a man of superb person—beautiful in a degree which made him a painter's model, both as to face and figure; and, accordingly, in a land where conquests of that nature were so easy, and the subjects of so trifling an effort, he had been distinguished, to his own as well as the public eyes, by a rapid succession of *bonnes fortunes* amongst women. Such, and so glorified by triumphs the most unquestionable and flattering, had the earthquake of the Revolution found him. From that moment he had no leisure, not a thought, to bestow upon his former selfish and frivolous pursuits. He was hurried, as one inspired by some high apostolic passion, into the service of the unhappy and desolate serfs amongst his own countrymen—such as are described, at an earlier date, by Madame de Sevigné, as the victims of feudal institutions; and one day, as he was walking with Wordsworth in the neighbourhood of Orleans, and they had turned into a little quiet lane, leading off from a heath, suddenly they came upon the following spectacle:—A girl, seventeen or eighteen years old, hunger-bitten, and wasted to a meagre shadow, was knitting, in a dejected, drooping way; whilst to her arm was attached, by a rope, the horse, equally

famished, that earned the miserable support of her family. Beaupuis comprehended the scene in a moment; and, seizing Wordsworth by the arm, he said,—‘Dear English friend!—brother from a nation of freemen!—*that* it is which is the curse of our people, in their widest section; and to cure this it is, as well as to maintain our work against the kings of the earth, that blood must be shed and tears must flow for many years to come!’ At that time the Revolution had not fulfilled its tendencies; as yet, the king was on the throne; the fatal 10th of August 1792 had not dawned; and thus far there was safety for a subject of kings.¹ The irresistible stream was hurrying forwards. The king fell; and (to pause for a moment) how divinely is the fact recorded by Wordsworth, in the MS. poem on his own life, placing the awful scenes past and passing in Paris under a pathetic relief from the description of the golden, autumnal day, sleeping in sunshine—

‘When I

Towards the fierce metropolis bent my steps,
The homeward road to England. From his throne
The king had fallen,’ etc.

What a picture does he give of the fury which there possessed the public mind; of the frenzy which shone in every eye, and through every gesture; of the stormy groups assembled at the Palais

¹ How little has any adequate power as yet approached this great theme! Not the Grecian stage, not ‘the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes,’ in any of its scenes, unfold such tragical grouping of circumstances and situations as may be gathered from the memoirs of the time. The galleries and vast staircases of Versailles, at early dawn, on some of the greatest days—filled with dreadful faces—the figure of the Duke of Orleans obscurely detected amongst them—the growing fury—the growing panic—the blind tumult—and the dimness of the event,—all make up a scene worthy to blend with our images of Babylon or of Nineveh with the enemy in all her gates, Memphis or Jerusalem in their agonies. But, amongst all the exponents of the growing agitation that besieged the public mind, none is so soundly impressive as the scene (every Sunday renewed) at the Chapel Royal. Even in the most penitential of the litanies, in the presence when most immediately confessed of God himself—when the antiphonies are chanted, one party singing, with fury and gnashing of teeth, *Salvum fac Regem*, and another, with equal hatred and fervour, answering *Et Reginam* (the poor queen at this time engrossing the popular hatred)—the organ roared into thunder—the semi-chorus swelled into shouting—the menaces into defiance—again the crashing semi-choir sang with shouts their *Salvum fac Regem*—again the vengeful antiphony hurled back its *Et Reginam*—and one person, an eye witness of these scenes, which mounted in violence on each successive Sunday, declared that oftentimes the semi-choral bodies were at the point of fighting with each other in the presence of the king. [Q.]

Royal, or the Tuileries, with 'hissing factionists' for ever in their centre, 'hissing' from the self-baffling of their own madness, and incapable from wrath of speaking clearly; of fear already creeping over the manners of multitudes; of stealthy movements through back streets; plotting and counter-plotting in every family; feuds to extermination, dividing children of the same house for ever; scenes such as those of the Chapel Royal (now silenced on that *public* stage), repeating themselves daily amongst private friends; and, to show the universality of this maniacal possession—that it was no narrow storm discharging its fury by local concentration upon a single city, but that it overspread the whole realm of France—a picture is given, wearing the same features, of what passed daily at Orleans, Blois, and other towns. The citizens are described in the attitudes they assumed at the daily coming in of the post from Paris; the fierce sympathy is portrayed with which they echoed back the feelings of their compatriots in the capital: men of all parties had been there up to this time—aristocrats as well as democrats; and one, in particular, of the former class is put forward as a representative of his class. This man, duly as the hour arrived which brought the Parisian newspapers, read restlessly of the tumults and insults amongst which the Royal Family now passed their days; of the decrees by which his own order were threatened or assailed; of the self-expatriation, now continually swelling in amount, as a measure of despair on the part of myriads, as well priests as gentry—all this and worse he read in public; and still, as he read,

'His hand

Haunted his sword, like an uneasy spot

In his own body.'

In short, as there never has been so strong a national convulsion diffused so widely, with equal truth it may be asserted, that no describer, so powerful, or idealizing so magnificently what he deals with, has ever been a real living spectator of parallel scenes. The French, indeed, it may be said, are far enough from being a people profound in feeling. True; but, of all people, they most exhibit their feeling on the surface; are the most *demonstrative* (to use a modern term) and most of all (except Italians) mark their feelings by outward expression of gesticulation: not to insist upon the obvious truth—that even a people of shallow feeling may be

deeply moved by tempests which uproot the forest of a thousand years' growth; by changes in the very organization of society, such as throw all things, for a time, into one vast anarchy; and by murderous passions, alternately the effect and the cause of that same chaotic anarchy. Now, it was in this autumn of 1792, as I have already said, that Wordsworth parted finally from his illustrious friend—for, all things considered, he may be justly so entitled—the gallant Beaupuis. This great season of public trial had searched men's natures; revealed their real hearts; brought into light and action qualities oftentimes not suspected by their possessors; and had thrown men, as in elementary states of society, each upon his own native resources, unaided by the old conventional forces of rank and birth. Beaupuis had shone to unusual advantage under this general trial; he had discovered, even to the philosophic eye of Wordsworth, a depth of benignity very unusual in a Frenchman; and not of local, contracted benignity, but of large, illimitable, apostolic devotion to the service of the poor and the oppressed—a fact the more remarkable as he had all the pretensions in his own person of high birth and high rank, and, so far as he had any personal interest embarked in the struggle, should have allied himself with the aristocracy. But of selfishness in any shape he had no vestiges; or, if he had, it showed itself in a slight tinge of vanity; yet, no—it was not vanity, but a radiant quickness of sympathy with the eye which expressed admiring love—sole relic of the chivalrous devotion once dedicated to the service of ladies. Now, again, he put on the garb of chivalry; it was a chivalry the noblest in the world, which opened his ear to the Pariah and the oppressed all over his misorganized country. A more apostolic fervour of holy zealotry in this great cause had not been seen since the days of Bartholomew las Casas, who showed the same excess of feeling in another direction. This sublime dedication of his being to a cause which, in his conception of it, extinguished all petty considerations for himself, and made him thenceforwards a creature of the national will—'a son of France,' in a more eminent and loftier sense than according to the heraldry of Europe—had extinguished even his sensibility to the voice of worldly honour. 'Injuries,' says Wordsworth—

'Injuries
Made him more gracious.'

And so utterly had he submitted his own will or separate interests to the transcendent voice of his country, which, in the main, he believed to be now speaking authentically for the first time since the foundations of Christendom, that, even against the motions of his own heart, he adopted the hatreds of the young republic, growing cruel in his purposes towards the ancient oppressor, out of very excess of love for the oppressed; and, against the voice of his own order, as well as in stern oblivion of many early friendships, he became the champion of democracy in the struggle everywhere commencing with prejudice or feudal privilege. Nay, he went so far upon the line of this new crusade against the evils of the world that he even accepted, with a conscientious defiance of his own quiet homage to the erring spirit of loyalty embarked upon that cause, a commission in the Republican armies preparing to move against La Vendée; and, finally, in that cause, as commander-in-chief, he laid down his life. 'He perished,' says Wordsworth—

'He perished fighting, in supreme command,
Upon the banks of the unhappy Loire.'

Homewards fled all the English from a land which now was fast making ready the shambles for its noblest citizens. Thither also came Wordsworth; and there he spent his time for a year and more chiefly in London, overwhelmed with shame and despondency for the disgrace and scandal brought upon Liberty by the atrocities committed in that holy name. Upon this subject he dwells with deep emotion in the poem on his own life; and he records the awful triumph for retribution accomplished which possessed him when crossing the sands of the great Bay of Morecamb from Lancaster to Ulverstone, and hearing from a horseman who passed him, in reply to the question—*Was there any news?*—'Yes, that Robespierre had perished.' Immediately a passion seized him, a transport of almost epileptic fervour, prompting him, as he stood alone upon this perilous¹ waste of

¹ That tract of the lake country which stretches southwards from Hawkshead and the lakes of Esthwaite, Windermere, and Coniston, to the little town of Ulverstone (which may be regarded as the metropolis of the little romantic English Calabria called Furness), is divided from the main part of Lancashire by the estuary of Morecamb. The sea retires with the ebb tide to a vast distance, leaving the sands passable through a few hours for horses

sands, to shout aloud anthems of thanksgiving for this great vindication of eternal justice. Still, though justice was done upon one great traitor to the cause, the cause itself was overcast with clouds too heavily to find support and employment for the hopes of a poet who had believed in a golden era ready to open upon the prospects of human nature. It gratified and solaced his heart that the indignation of mankind should have wreaked itself upon the chief monsters that had outraged their nature and their hopes; but for the present he found it necessary to comfort his disappointment by turning away from politics to studies less capable of deceiving his expectations.

From this period, therefore—that is, from the year 1794–95—we may date the commencement of Wordsworth's entire self-dedication to poetry as the study and main business of his life. Somewhere about this period also (though, according to my remembrance of what Miss Wordsworth once told me, I think one year or so later) his sister joined him; and they began¹ to keep house together: once at Race Down, in Dorsetshire; once at Clevedon, on the coast of Somersetshire; then amongst the Quantock Hills, in the same county, or in that neighbourhood; particularly at Alfoxton, a beautiful country-house, with a grove and shrubbery attached, belonging to Mr. St. Aubyn, a minor, and let (I believe) on the terms of keeping the house in repair. Whilst resident at this last place it was, as I have generally understood, and in the year 1797 or 1798, that Wordsworth first became acquainted with Coleridge; though possibly in the year I am wrong; for it occurs to me that, in a poem of Coleridge's dated in 1796, there is an allusion to a young writer of the name of Wordsworth as one who had something austere in his style, but otherwise was more original than any other poet of the age; and

and carriages. But, partly from the daily variation in these hours, partly from the intricacy of the pathless track which must be pursued, and partly from the galloping pace at which the returning tide comes in, many fatal accidents are continually occurring—sometimes to the too venturesome traveller who has slighted the aid of guides—sometimes to the guides themselves, when baffled and perplexed by mists. Gray the poet mentions one of the latter class as having then recently occurred, under affecting circumstances. Local tradition records a long list of such cases. [Q.]

¹ I do not, on consideration, know when they might begin to keep house together: but, by a passage in 'The Prelude,' they must have made a tour together as early as 1787. [Q.]

it is probable that this knowledge of the poetry would be subsequent to a personal knowledge of the author, considering the little circulation which any poetry of a Wordsworthian stamp would be likely to attain at that time.

It was at Alfoxton that Miss Mary Hutchinson visited her cousins the Wordsworths, and there, or previously in the north of England, at Stockton-upon-Tees and Darlington, that the attachment began between Miss Mary Hutchinson and Wordsworth which terminated in their marriage about the beginning of the present century.* The marriage took place in the north; somewhere, I believe, in Yorkshire; and, immediately after the ceremony, Wordsworth brought his bride to Grasmere; in which most lovely of English valleys he had previously obtained, upon a lease of seven or eight years, the cottage in which I found him living at my first visit to him in November 1807. I have heard that there was a paragraph inserted on this occasion in the 'Morning Post' or 'Courier'—and I have an indistinct remembrance of having once seen it myself—which described this event of the poet's marriage in the most ludicrous terms of silly pastoral sentimentality; the cottage being described as 'the abode of content and all the virtues,' the vale itself in the same puerile slang, and the whole event in the style of allegorical trifling about the Muses, etc. The masculine and severe taste of Wordsworth made him peculiarly open to annoyance from such absurd trifling; and, unless his sense of the ludicrous overpowered his graver feelings, he must have been much displeased with the paragraph. But, after all, I have understood that the whole affair was an unseasonable jest of Coleridge's or Lamb's.

* William and Dorothy lived together briefly early in 1794 at Windy Brow, near Keswick, but first really set up housekeeping at Racedown Lodge, Dorsetshire, in September 1795, from which—in order to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey—they moved to Alfoxden House, Somerset, in July 1797, where they stayed until June 1798. The owner was Mr St Albyn, and they paid £23 a year rent. Coleridge and Wordsworth probably met in 1795 Coleridge's allusion to Wordsworth's poetry which De Quincey mentions occurs in a note to 'Lines Written at Shurton Bars' in the 1796 edition of Coleridge's *Poems*: 'The expression "green radiance" is borrowed from Mr. Wordsworth, a poet whose versification is occasionally harsh and his diction too frequently obscure; but whom I deem unrivalled among the writers of the present day in manly sentiment, moral imagery, and vivid colouring.' Mary Hutchinson was a rather remote cousin of the Wordsworths and had been a schoolmate of William's at Penrich. She paid a long visit to Racedown in 1797 and married William on 4th October 1802, at Gallow Hill.

To us who, in after years, were Wordsworth's friends, or, at least, intimate acquaintances—viz., to Professor Wilson and myself—the most interesting circumstance in this marriage, the one which perplexed us exceedingly, was the very possibility that it should ever have been brought to bear. For we could not conceive of Wordsworth as submitting his faculties to the humiliations and devotion of courtship. That self-surrender—that prostration of mind by which a man is too happy and proud to express the profundity of his service to the woman of his heart—it seemed a mere impossibility that ever Wordsworth should be brought to feel for a single instant; and what he did not sincerely feel, assuredly he was not the person to profess.* Wordsworth, I take it upon myself to say, had not the feelings within him which make this total devotion to a woman possible. There never lived a woman whom he would not have lectured and admonished under circumstances that should have seemed to require it; nor would he have conversed with her in any mood whatever without wearing an air of mild condescension to her understanding. To lie at her feet, to make her his idol, to worship her very caprices, and to adore the most unreasonable of her frowns—these things were impossible to Wordsworth; and, being so, never could he, in any emphatic sense, have been a lover.

A lover, I repeat, in any passionate sense of the word, Wordsworth could not have been. And, moreover, it is remarkable that a woman who could dispense with that sort of homage in her suitor is not of a nature to inspire such a passion. That same meekness which reconciles her to the tone of superiority and freedom in the manner of her suitor, and which may afterwards in a wife become a sweet domestic grace, strips her of that too charming irritation, captivating at once and tormenting, which lurks in feminine pride. If there be an enchantress's spell yet surviving in this age of ours, it is the haughty grace of maidenly pride—the womanly sense of dignity, even when most in excess, and expressed in the language of scorn—which tortures a man and lacerates his heart, at the same time that it pierces him with admiration:—

* *Tait's* continues: 'Ah, happy, happy days!—in which, for a young man's heart that is deep and fervid in his affections, and passionate in his admirations, there is but one presence upon earth, one glory, one heaven of hope!—days how fugitive, how incapable of return, how imperishable to the heart of all that a man has lived!'

'Oh, what a world of scorn looks beautiful
In the contempt and anger of her lip!'

And she who spares a man the agitations of this thralldom robs him no less of its divinest transports. Wordsworth, however, who never could have laid aside his own nature sufficiently to have played *his* part in such an impassioned courtship, by suiting himself to this high sexual pride with the humility of a lover, quite as little could have enjoyed the spectacle of such a pride, or have viewed it in any degree as an attraction: it would to him have been a pure vexation. Looking down even upon the lady of his heart, as upon the rest of the world, from the eminence of his own intellectual superiority—viewing her, in fact, as a child—he would be much more disposed to regard any airs of feminine disdain she might assume as the impertinence of girlish levity than as the caprice of womanly pride; * and much I fear that, in any case of dispute, he would have called even his mistress, 'Child! child!' and perhaps even (but this I do not say with the same certainty) might have bid her hold her tongue.†

* *Tait's* reads 'He would not, indeed, like Petruchio, have hinted a possibility that he might be provoked to box her ears—for any mode of unmanly roughness would have seemed abominable to his nature, with the meanest of her sex; but . . .'

† *Tait's* continues: 'Think of that, reader, with such lovers as I am placing in ideal contrast with these!—imagine to yourself the haughty beauty, and the majestic wrath, never to be propitiated after hearing such irreverent language—nay, worse than irreverent language—language implying disenchantment! Yet still, it may be said, can a man forget—absolutely and in all moments forget—his intellectual superiority? You yourself, for example, who write these sketches, did it follow of necessity that the women you loved should be equal (or seem equal in your own eyes) to yourself in intellect? No; far from it I could not, perhaps, have loved, with a perfect love, any woman whom I had felt to be my own equal intellectually; but then I never thought of her in that light, or under that relation. When the golden gate was opened, when the gate moved upon its golden hinges that opened to me the paradise of her society—when her young, melodious laughter sounded in my too agitated ear—did I think of any claims that I could have? Too happy if I might be permitted to lay all things at her feet, all things that I could call my own, or ever hope to do so—yes, though it had been possible that by power divine I should possess the earth, and the inheritance of the earth—'

"The sea, and all which they contain." ††

What was intellect, what was power, what was empire, if I had happened to possess them all in excess! These things were not of the nature of, had no

†† 'Paradise Regained.'

If, however, no lover, in a proper sense,—though, from many exquisite passages, one might conceive that at some time of his life he was, as especially from the inimitable stanzas beginning—

‘When she I loved was strong and gay,
And like a rose in June,’

or perhaps (but less powerfully so, because here the passion, though profound, is less the *peculiar* passion of love) from the impassioned lamentation for ‘the pretty Barbara,’ beginning—

‘’Tis said that some have died for love;
And here and there, amidst unhallow’d ground
In the cold north,’ etc.—

yet, if no lover, or (which some of us have sometimes thought) a lover disappointed at some earlier period, by the death of her he loved, or by some other fatal event (for he always preserved a mysterious silence on the subject of that ‘Lucy,’ repeatedly alluded to or apostrophized in his poems); * at all events he made what for him turned out a happy marriage. Few people have lived on such terms of entire harmony and affection as he lived with the woman of his final choice. Indeed, the sweetness, almost unexampled, of temper, which shed so sunny a radiance over Mrs. Wordsworth’s manners, sustained by the happy life she led, the purity of her conscience, and the uniformity of her good

common nature with, did not resemble, were no approximation to, the sweet angelic power—power infinite, power deathless, power unutterable, which formed her virgin dowry. O heart, why art thou disquieted? Tempestuous, rebellious heart! oh, wherefore art thou still dreaming of things so long gone by, of expectations that could not be fulfilled, that, being mortal, must, in some point, have a mortal taint! Empty, empty thoughts! vanity of vanities! Yet no; not always; for sometimes, after days of intellectual toil, when half the whole world is dreaming—I wrap my head in the bed-clothes, which hide even the faintest murmurs yet lingering from the fretful day—

“The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day;”

and then through blinding tears I see again that golden gate; again I stand waiting at the entrance; until dreams come that carry me once more to the Paradise Beyond.’

* *Tait’s* adds: ‘and I have heard, from gossiping people about Hawkshead, some snatches of tragical story, which, after all, might be an idle semi-fable, improved out of slight materials)—let this matter have been as it might—’

health, made it impossible for anybody to have quarrelled with *her*; and whatever fits of ill-temper Wordsworth might have—for, with all his philosophy, he had such fits—met with no fuel to support them, except in the more irritable temperament of his sister. She was all fire, and an ardour which, like that of the first Lord Shaftesbury,

‘O’er-informed its tenement of clay’;

and, as this ardour looked out in every gleam of her wild eyes (those ‘wild eyes’ so finely noticed in the ‘Tintern Abbey’), as it spoke in every word of her self-baffled utterance, as it gave a trembling movement to her very person and demeanour—easily enough it might happen that any apprehension of an unkind word should with her kindle a dispute. It might have happened: and yet, to the great honour of both, having such impassioned temperaments, rarely it did happen; and this was the more remarkable, as I have been assured that both were, in childhood, irritable or even ill-tempered, and they were constantly together; for Miss Wordsworth was always ready to walk out—wet or dry, storm or sunshine, night or day; whilst Mrs. Wordsworth was completely dedicated to her maternal duties, and rarely left the house, unless when the weather was tolerable, or, at least, only for short rambles. I should not have noticed this trait in Wordsworth’s occasional manners, had it been gathered from domestic or confidential opportunities. But, on the contrary, the first two occasions on which, after months’ domestic intercourse with Wordsworth, I became aware of his possible ill-humour and peevishness, were so public, that others, and those strangers, must have been equally made parties to the scene. This scene occurred in Kendal.

Having brought down the history of Wordsworth to the time of his marriage, I am reminded by that event to mention the singular good fortune, in all points of worldly prosperity, which has accompanied him through life. His marriage—the capital event of life—was fortunate, and inaugurated a long succession of other prosperities. He has himself described, in his ‘Leech-Gatherer,’ the fears that at one time, or at least in some occasional moments of his life, haunted him, lest at some period or other he might be reserved for poverty. ‘Cold, pain, and hunger, and all fleshly ills,’

occurred to his boding apprehension, and 'mighty poets in their misery dead.'

'He thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in its pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough along the mountain-side.'

And, at starting on his career of life, certainly no man had plainer reasons for anticipating the worst evils that have ever persecuted poets, excepting only two reasons which might warrant him in hoping better; and these two were—his great prudence, and the temperance of his daily life. He could not be betrayed into foolish engagements; he could not be betrayed into expensive habits. Profusion and extravagance had no hold over him, by any one passion or taste. He was not luxurious in anything; was not vain or even careful of external appearances (not, at least, since he had left Cambridge, and visited a mighty nation in civil convulsions); was not even in the article of books expensive. Very few books sufficed him; he was careless habitually of all the current literature, or indeed of any literature that could not be considered as enshrining the very ideal, capital, and elementary grandeur of the human intellect. In this extreme limitation of his literary sensibilities he was as much assisted by that accident of his own intellectual condition—viz. extreme, intense, unparalleled *one-sidedness* (*einseitigkeit*)—as by any peculiar sanity of feeling. Thousands of books that have given rapturous delight to millions of ingenuous minds for Wordsworth were absolutely a dead letter—closed and sealed up from his sensibilities and his powers of appreciation, not less than colours from a blind man's eye. Even the few books which his peculiar mind had made indispensable to him were not in such a sense indispensable as they would have been to a man of more sedentary habits. He lived in the open air, and the enormity of pleasure which both he and his sister drew from the common appearances of nature and their everlasting variety—variety so infinite that, if no one leaf of a tree or shrub ever exactly resembled another in all its filaments and their arrangement, still less did any one day ever repeat another in all its pleasurable elements, This pleasure was to him in the stead of many libraries:—

'One impulse, from a vernal wood,
 Could teach him more of Man,
 Of moral evil and of good,
 Than all the sages can.'

And he, we may be sure, who could draw.

'Even from the meanest flower that blows,
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,'—

to whom the mere daisy, the pansy, the primrose, could furnish pleasures—not the puerile ones which his most puerile and worldly insulters imagined, but pleasures drawn from depths of reverie and meditative tenderness far beyond all power of *their* hearts to conceive: that man would hardly need any large variety of books. In fact, there were only two provinces of literature in which Wordsworth could be looked upon as decently well read—Poetry and Ancient History. Nor do I believe that he would much have lamented, on his own account, if all books had perished, excepting the entire body of English Poetry, and, perhaps, 'Plutarch's Lives.'¹

With these simple or rather austere tastes, Wordsworth (it might seem) had little reason to fear poverty, supposing him in possession of any moderate income; but meantime he had none. About the time when he left college, I have good grounds for believing that his whole regular income was precisely = 0. Some fragments must have survived from the funds devoted to his education; and with these, no doubt, he supported the expenses of his Continental tours, and his year's residence in France. But, at length, 'cold, pain, and hunger, and all fleshly ills,' must have stared him in the face pretty earnestly. And hope of longer evading an unpleasant destiny of daily toil, in some form or other, there seemed absolutely none. 'For,' as he himself expostulates with himself—

'For how can *he* expect that others should
 Sow for him, build for *him*, and, at his call,
 Love him, who for himself will take no thought at all?'

¹ I do not mean to insinuate that Wordsworth was at all in the dark about the inaccuracy and want of authentic weight attaching to Plutarch as a historian; but his business with Plutarch was not for purposes of research: he was satisfied with his fine moral effects. [Q.]

In this dilemma, he had all but resolved, as Miss Wordsworth once told me, to take pupils; and perhaps *that*, though odious enough, was the sole resource he had; for Wordsworth never acquired any popular talent of writing for the current press; and, at that period of his life, he was gloomily unfitted for bending to such a yoke. In this crisis of his fate it was that Wordsworth, for once, and once only, became a martyr to some nervous affection. *That* raised pity; but I could not forbear smiling at the remedy, or palliation, which his few friends adopted. Every night they played at cards with him, as the best mode of beguiling his sense of distress, whatever that might be: *cards*, which, in any part of the thirty-and-one years since *I* have known Wordsworth, could have had as little power to interest him, or to cheat him of sorrow, as marbles or a top. However, so it was; for my information could not be questioned: it came from Miss Wordsworth.

The crisis, as I have said, had arrived for determining the future colour of his life. Memorable it is, that exactly in those critical moments when some decisive step had first become necessary, there happened the first instance of Wordsworth's good luck; and equally memorable that, at measured intervals throughout the long sequel of his life since then, a regular succession of similar but superior windfalls have fallen in, to sustain his expenditure, in exact concurrence with the growing claims upon his purse. A more fortunate man, I believe, does not exist than Wordsworth. The aid which now dropped from heaven, as it were, to enable him to range at will in paths of his own choosing, and

‘Finally array
His temples with the Muses diadem,’

came in the shape of a bequest from Raisley Calvert, a young man of good family in Cumberland, who died about this time of pulmonary consumption. A very remarkable young man he must have been, this Raisley Calvert, to have discerned, at this early period, that future superiority in Wordsworth which so few people suspected. He was the brother of a Cumberland gentleman, whom slightly I know; a generous man, doubtless; for he made no sort of objections (though legally, I have heard, he might) to his brother's farewell memorial of regard; a good man to all his dependents, as I have generally understood, in the neighbourhood

of Windy Brow, his mansion, near Keswick; and, as Southey always said (who must know better than I could do), a man of strong natural endowments; else, as his talk was of oxen, I might have made the mistake of supposing him to be, in heart and soul, what he was in profession—a mere farming country gentleman, whose ambition was chiefly directed to the turning up of mighty turnips. The sum left by Raisley Calvert was £900; and it was laid out in an annuity. This was the basis of Wordsworth's prosperity in life; and upon this he has built up, by a series of accessions, in which each step, taken separately for itself, seems perfectly natural, whilst the total result has undoubtedly something wonderful about it, the present goodly edifice of his fortunes. Next in the series came the present Lord Lonsdale's repayment of his predecessor's debt. Upon that, probably, it was that Wordsworth felt himself entitled to marry. Then, I believe, came some fortune with Miss Hutchinson; then—that is, fourthly—some worthy uncle of the same lady was pleased to betake himself to a better world, leaving to various nieces, and especially to Mrs. Wordsworth, something or other—I forget what, but it was expressed by thousands of pounds. At this moment, Wordsworth's family had begun to increase; and the worthy old uncle, like everybody else in Wordsworth's case,* finding his property very clearly 'wanted,' and, as people would tell him, 'bespoke,' felt how very indelicate it would look for him to stay any longer in this world; and so off he moved. But Wordsworth's family, and the wants of that family, still continued to increase; and the next person—viz., the fifth—who stood in the way, and must, therefore, have considered himself rapidly growing into a nuisance, was the stamp-distributor for the county of Westmoreland. About March 1814, I think it was, that his very comfortable situation was wanted. Probably it took a month for the news to reach him; because in April, and not before, feeling that he had received a proper notice to quit, he, good man (this stamp-distributor), like all the rest, distributed himself and his office into two different places—the latter falling, of course, into the hands of Wordsworth.

This office, which it was Wordsworth's pleasure to speak of as 'a little one,' yielded, I believe, somewhere about £500 a year.

* *Tait's* adds: '(I wish I could say the same in my own,)'.

Gradually, even *that*, with all former sources of income, became insufficient; which ought not to surprise anybody; for a son at Oxford, as a gentleman commoner, would spend, at the least, £300 per annum; and there were other children. Still, it is wrong to say that it *had* become insufficient; as usual, it had not come to that; but, on the first symptoms arising that it soon *would* come to that, somebody, of course, had notice to consider himself a sort of nuisance-elect;—in this case, it was the distributor of stamps for the county of Cumberland. His district was absurdly large; and what so reasonable as that he should submit to a Polish partition of his profits—no, not Polish; for, on reflection, such a partition neither was nor could be attempted with regard to an actual incumbent. But then, since people had such consideration for him as not to remodel the office so long as he lived, on the other hand, the least he could do for ‘people’ in return—so as to show his sense of this consideration—was not to trespass on so much goodness longer than necessary. Accordingly, here, as in all cases before, the *Deus ex machinâ* who invariably interfered when any *nodus* arose in Wordsworth’s affairs, such as could be considered *vindice dignus*, caused the distributor to begone into a region where no stamps are wanted, about the very month, or so, when an additional £400 per annum became desirable. This, or perhaps more, was understood to have been added, by the new arrangement, to the Westmoreland distributorship; the small towns of Keswick and Cockermouth, together with the important one of Whitehaven, being severed, under this remodelling, from their old dependency on Cumberland (to which geographically they belonged), and transferred to the small territory of rocky Westmoreland, the sum total of whose inhabitants was at that time not much above 50,000; of which number, one-third, or nearly so, was collected into the only important town of Kendal; but, of the other two-thirds, a larger proportion was a simple agricultural or pastoral population than anywhere else in England. In Westmoreland, therefore, it may be supposed that the stamp demand could not have been so great, not perhaps by three-quarters, as in Cumberland; which, besides having a population at least three times as large, had more and larger towns. The result of this new distribution was something that approached to an equalization of the districts—giving to each, as was said, in round terms, a thousand a year.

Thus I have traced Wordsworth's ascent through its several steps and stages, to what, for his moderate desires and habits so philosophic, may be fairly considered opulence. And it must rejoice every man who joins in the public homage *now* rendered to his powers (and what man is to be found that, more or less, does not?) to hear, with respect to one so lavishly endowed by nature, that he has not been neglected by fortune; that he has never had the finer edge of his sensibilities dulled by the sad anxieties, the degrading fears, the miserable dependencies of debt; that he has been blessed with competency even when poorest; has had hope and cheerful prospects in reversion through every stage of his life; that at all times he has been liberated from *reasonable* anxieties about the final interests of his children; that at all times he has been blessed with leisure, the very amplest that ever man enjoyed, for intellectual pursuits the most delightful; yes, that, even as regards those delicate and coy pursuits, he has possessed, in combination, all the conditions for their most perfect culture—the leisure, the ease, the solitude, the society, the domestic peace, the local scenery—Paradise for his eye, in Miltonic beauty, lying outside his windows, Paradise for his heart, in the perpetual happiness of his own fireside; and, finally, when increasing years might be supposed to demand something more of modern luxuries, and expanding intercourse with society something more of refined elegancies, that his means, still keeping pace in almost arithmetical ratio with his wants, had shed the graces of art upon the failing powers of nature, had stripped infirmity of discomfort, and (so far as the necessities of things will allow) had placed the final stages of life, by means of many compensations, by universal praise, by plaudits reverberated from senates, benedictions wherever his poems have penetrated, honour, troops of friends—in short, by all that miraculous prosperity can do to evade the primal decrees of nature, had placed the final stages upon a level with the first.*

* *Tait's* continues: 'This report of Wordsworth's success in life, will rejoice thousands of hearts. And a good nature will sympathize with that joy, will exult in that exultation, no matter for any private grievances, and with a *non obstante* to any wrong, however stinging, which it may suppose itself to have suffered. Yet, William Wordsworth, nevertheless, if you ever allowed yourself to forget the *human* tenure of these mighty blessings—if, though wearing your honours justly—mostly justly, as respects A. and B., this man and that man—you have forgotten that *no* man can challenge such

But now, reverting to the subject of Wordsworth's prosperity, I have numbered up six separate stages of good luck—six instances of pecuniary showers emptying themselves into his very bosom, at the very moments when they *began* to be needed, on the first symptoms that they might be wanted—accesses of fortune stationed upon his road like repeating frigates, connecting, to all appearance, some preconcerted line of operations, and, amidst the tumults of chance, wearing as much the air of purpose and design as if they supported a human plan.* I have come down to the sixth case. Whether there were any seventh, I do not know: but confident I feel that, had a seventh been required by circumstances, a seventh would have happened.† So true it is that still, as Wordsworth needed a place or a fortune, the holder of that place or fortune was immediately served with a summons to surrender it: so certainly was this impressed upon my belief, as one of the blind necessities making up the prosperity and fixed

trophies by any absolute or meritorious title, as respects the dark powers which give and take away—if, in the blind spirit of presumption, you have insulted the less prosperous fortunes of a brother, frail, indeed, but not dishonourably frail, and in his very frailty—that is, in his failing exertions—and for the deficient measure of his energies, (doubtless too much below the standard of reasonable expectations,) able to plead that which you never cared to ask—then, if (instead of being 68 years old) you were 68½, I should warn you to listen for the steps of Nemesis approaching from afar; and, were it only in relation to your own extremity of good fortune, I would say, in the case of your being a young man, lavish as she may have been hitherto, and for years to come may still be—

"Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
Her audit, though delay'd, answered must be,
And her *quietus* is—to render thee." **

* *Tait's* adds: '—so much the more, also, to a thoughtful observer, as the subject of this overflowing favour from the blind goddess, happened, by the rarest of accidents, to be that man whom many of us would have declared the most worthy of that favour, most of us, perhaps, as in the case of Themistocles, would have declared, at the very least, second best.'

† *Tait's* adds: 'At the same time, every reader will, of course, understand me to mean, that not only was it utterly out of the power or will of Wordsworth to exert any, the very slightest influence upon these cases, not only was this impossible—not only was it impossible to the moral nature of Wordsworth, that he should even express that sort of interest in the event, which is sometimes intimated to the incumbents of a place or church-living by sudden inquiries after their health from eager expectants—but also, in every one of the instances recorded, he could have had not the slightest knowledge before-hand of any interest at issue for himself. This explanation I make to forestall the merest possibility of misapprehension. And yet, for all that . . .'

** Shakspeare's Sonnets

destiny of Wordsworth, that, for myself, had I happened to know of any peculiar adaptation in an estate or office of mine to an existing need of Wordsworth's, forthwith, and with the speed of a man running for his life, I would have laid it down at his feet. 'Take it,' I should have said; 'take it, or in three weeks I shall be a dead man.'

Well, let me pause: I think the reader is likely by this time to have a slight notion of *my* notion of Wordsworth's inevitable prosperity, and the sort of *lien* that he had upon the incomes of other men who happened to stand in his way. The same prosperity attended the other branches of the family, with the single exception of John, the brother who perished in the *Abergavenny*: and even he was prosperous up to the moment of his fatal accident. As to Miss Wordsworth, who will, by some people, be classed amongst the non-prosperous, I rank her amongst the most fortunate of women; or, at least, if regard be had to that period of life which is most capable of happiness. Her fortune, after its repayment by Lord Lonsdale, was, much of it, confided, with a sisterly affection, to the use of her brother John; and part of it, I have heard, perished in his ship. How much, I never felt myself entitled to ask; but certainly a part was on that occasion understood to have been lost irretrievably. Either it was that only a partial insurance had been effected, or else the nature of the accident, being in home waters (off the coast of Dorsetshire), might, by the nature of the contract, have taken the case out of the benefit of the policy. This loss, however, had it even been total, for a single sister amongst a family of flourishing brothers, could not be of any lasting importance. A much larger number of voices would proclaim her to have been unfortunate in life because she made no marriage connection; and certainly, the insipid as well as unfeeling ridicule which descends so plentifully upon those women who, perhaps from strength of character, have refused to make such a connection where it promised little of elevated happiness, *does* make the state of singleness somewhat of a trial to the patience of many; and to many the vexation of this trial has proved a snare for beguiling them of their honourable resolutions.* Meantime, as the opportunities are rare in which all the conditions concur for happy marriage connections, how

* *Tait's* adds: 'Doubtless the most elevated form, and the most impassioned, of human happiness cannot be had out of marriage.'

important it is that the dignity of high-minded women should be upheld by society in the honourable election they make of a self-dependent virgin seclusion, by preference to a heartless marriage! Such women, as Mrs. Trollope justly remarks, fill a place in society which in their default would *not* be filled, and are available for duties requiring a tenderness and a punctuality that could not be looked for from women preoccupied with household or maternal claims. If there were no regular fund (so to speak) of women free from conjugal and maternal duties, upon what body could we draw for our 'sisters of mercy,' etc.? In another point Mrs. Trollope is probably right: few women live unmarried from necessity. Miss Wordsworth had several offers; amongst them, to my knowledge, one from Hazlitt; all of them she rejected decisively. And she did right. A happier life, by far, was hers in youth, coming as near as difference of scenery and difference of relations would permit to that which was promised to Ruth—the Ruth of her brother's creation¹—by the youth who came from Georgia's shore; for, though not upon American savannah, or Canadian lakes—

'With all their fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Amongst the evening clouds,'

yet, amongst the loveliest scenes of sylvan England, and (at intervals) of sylvan Germany—amongst lakes, too, far better fitted to give the *sense* of their own character than the vast inland *seas* of America, and amongst mountains more romantic than many of the chief ranges in that country—her time fled away like some golden age, or like the life of primeval man; and she, like Ruth, was for years allowed

'To run, though *not* a bride,
A sylvan huntress, by the side'

¹ 'The Ruth of her brother's creation':—So I express it; because so much in the development of the story and situations necessarily belongs to the poet. Else, for the mere outline of the story, it was founded upon fact. Wordsworth himself told me, in general terms, that the case which suggested the poem was that of an American lady, whose husband forsook her at the very place of embarkation from England, under circumstances and under expectations, upon her part, very much the same as those of Ruth. I am afraid, however, that the husband was an attorney; which is intolerable; *risi prius* cannot be harmonized with the dream-like fairyland of Georgia. [Q.]

of him to whom she, like Ruth, had dedicated her days, and to whose children, afterwards, she dedicated a love like that of mothers. Dear Miss Wordsworth! How noble a creature did she seem when I first knew her!—and when, on the very first night which I passed in her brother's company, he read to me, in illustration of something he was saying, a passage from Fairfax's 'Tasso,' ending pretty nearly with these words—

'Amidst the broad fields and the endless wood,
The lofty lady kept her maidenhood,'

I thought that, possibly, he had his sister in his thoughts. Yet 'lofty' was hardly the right word. Miss Wordsworth was too ardent and fiery a creature to maintain the reserve essential to dignity; and dignity was the last thing one thought of in the presence of one so natural, so fervent in her feelings, and so embarrassed in their utterance—sometimes, also, in the attempt to check them. It must not, however, be supposed that there was any silliness or weakness of enthusiasm about her. She was under the continual restraint of severe good sense, though liberated from that false shame which, in so many persons, accompanies all expressions of natural emotion; and she had too long enjoyed the ennobling conversation of her brother, and his admirable comments on the poets, which they read in common, to fail in any essential point of logic or propriety of thought. Accordingly, her letters, though the most careless and unelaborate—nay, the most hurried that can be imagined—are models of good sense and just feeling. In short, beyond any person I have known in this world, Miss Wordsworth was the creature of impulse; but, as a woman most thoroughly virtuous and well-principled, as one who could not fail to be kept right by her own excellent heart, and as an intellectual creature from her cradle, with much of her illustrious brother's peculiarity of mind—finally, as one who had been, in effect, educated and trained by that very brother—she won the sympathy and the respectful regard of every man worthy to approach her.* Properly, and in a spirit of prophecy, was she

* *Tait's* continues: 'All of us loved her—by which *us* I mean especially Professor Wilson and myself, together with such Oxford or Cambridge men, or men from Scotland, as either of us or others introduced to her society. And many a time, when the Professor and myself—travelling together in solitary places, sleeping in the same bedroom, or (according to accidents of

named *Dorothy*; in its Greek meaning,¹ *gift of God*, well did this name prefigure the relation in which she stood to Wordsworth, the mission with which she was charged—to wait upon him as the tenderest and most faithful of domestics; to love him as a sister; to sympathize with him as a confidante; to counsel him; to cheer him and sustain him by the natural expression of her feelings—so quick, so ardent, so unaffected—upon the probable effect of whatever thoughts or images he might conceive; finally, and above all other ministrations, to ingraft, by her sexual sense of beauty, upon his masculine austerity that delicacy and those graces which else (according to the grateful acknowledgments of his own maturest retrospect) it never could have had—

‘The blessing of my later years
Was with me when I was a boy;
She gave me hopes, she gave me fears,
A heart the fountain of sweet tears,

And love, and thought, and joy.’

And elsewhere he describes her, in a philosophic poem, still in MS., as one who planted flowers and blossoms with her feminine hand upon what might else have been an arid rock—massy, indeed, and grand, but repulsive from the severity of its features. I may sum up in one brief abstract the amount of Miss Wordsworth’s character, as a companion, by saying, that she was the very wildest (in the sense of the most natural) person I have ever known; and also the truest, most inevitable, and at the same time the quickest and readiest in her sympathy with either joy or sorrow, with laughter or with tears, with the realities of life or the larger realities of the poets!

wayfaring life) in the same bed—have fallen into the most confidential interchange of opinions upon a family in which we had both so common and so profound an interest, whatever matter of anger or complaint we might find or fancy in others, Miss Wordsworth’s was a name privileged from censure; or, if a smile were bestowed upon some eccentricity or innocent foible, it was with the tenderness that we should have shewn to a sister.’

¹ Of course, therefore, it is essentially the same name as *Theodora*, the same elements being only differently arranged. Yet how opposite is the impression upon the mind! and chiefly, I suppose, from the too prominent emblazonment of this name in the person of Justinian’s scandalous wife; though, for my own part, I am far from believing all the infamous stories which we read about her. [Q.]

Meantime, amidst all this fascinating furniture of her mind, won from nature, from solitude, from enlightened companionship, Miss Wordsworth was as thoroughly deficient (some would say painfully deficient—I say charmingly deficient) in ordinary female accomplishments as ‘Cousin Mary’ in dear Miss Mitford’s delightful sketch. Of French, she might have barely enough to read a plain modern page of narrative; Italian, I question whether any; German, just enough to insult the German literati, by showing how little she had found them or their writings necessary to her heart. The ‘Luise’ of Voss, the ‘Hermann und Dorothea’ of Goethe she had begun to translate, as young ladies do ‘Télémaque’; but, like them, had chiefly cultivated the first two pages;¹ with the third she had a slender acquaintance, and with the fourth she meditated an intimacy at some future day. Music, in her solitary and out-of-doors life, she could have little reason for cultivating; nor is it possible that any woman can draw the enormous energy requisite for this attainment, upon a *modern* scale of perfection, out of any other principle than that of vanity (at least of great value for social applause) or else of deep musical sensibility; neither of which belonged to Miss Wordsworth’s constitution of mind. But, as everybody agrees in our days to think this accomplishment of no value whatever, and, in fact, *unproducible*, unless existing in an exquisite state of culture, no complaint could be made on that score, nor any surprise felt. But the case in which the irregularity of Miss Wordsworth’s education *did* astonish one was in that part which respected her literary knowledge. In whatever she read, or neglected to read, she had obeyed the single impulse of her own heart; where that led her, *there* she followed: where that was mute or indifferent, not a thought had she to bestow upon a writer’s high reputation, or the call for some acquaintance with his works to meet the demands of society. And thus the strange anomaly arose, of a woman deeply acquainted with some great authors, whose works lie pretty much

¹ Viz., ‘Calypso ne savoit se consoler du départ,’ etc. For how long a period (viz., nearly two centuries) has Calypso been inconsolable in the morning studies of young ladies! As Fénelon’s most dreary romance always opened at one or other of these three earliest and dreary pages, naturally to my sympathetic fancy the poor unhappy goddess seemed to be eternally aground on this Goodwin Sand of inconsolability. It is amongst the standing hypocrisies of the world, that most people affect a reverence for this book, which nobody reads. [Q.]

out of the fashionable beat; able, moreover, in her own person, to produce brilliant effects; able on some subjects to write delightfully, and with the impress of originality upon all she uttered; and yet ignorant of great classical works in her own mother tongue, and careless of literary history in a degree which at once exiled her from the rank and privileges of *bluestockingism*.

The reader may, perhaps, have objected silently to the illustration drawn from Miss Mitford, that 'Cousin Mary' does not effect her fascinations out of pure negations. Such negations, from the mere startling effect of their oddity in this present age, might fall in with the general current of her attractions; but Cousin Mary's undoubtedly lay in the *positive* witcheries of a manner and a character transcending, by force of irresistible nature (as in a similar case recorded by Wordsworth in 'The Excursion') all the pomp of nature and art united as seen in ordinary creatures. Now, in Miss Wordsworth, there were certainly no 'Cousin Mary' fascinations of manner and deportment, that snatch a grace beyond the reach of art: *there* she was indeed, painfully deficient; for hurry mars and defeats even the most ordinary expression of the feminine character—viz. its gentleness: abruptness and trepidation leave often a joint impression of what seems for an instant both rudeness and ungracefulness: and the least painful impression was that of unsexual awkwardness. But the point in which Miss Wordsworth made the most ample amends for all that she wanted of more customary accomplishments, was this very originality and native freshness of intellect, which settled with so bewitching an effect upon some of her writings, and upon many a sudden remark or ejaculation, extorted by something or other that struck her eye, in the clouds, or in colouring, or in accidents of light and shade, of form or combination of form. To talk of her 'writings' is too pompous an expression, or at least far beyond any pretensions that she ever made for herself. Of poetry she has written little indeed; and that little not, in my opinion, of much merit. The verses published by her brother, and beginning, 'Which way does the wind come?', meant only as nursery lines, are certainly wild and pretty; but the other specimen is likely to strike most readers as feeble and trivial in the sentiment. Meantime, the book which is in very deed a monument to her power of catching and expressing all the hidden beauties of natural scenery, with a felicity of diction, a truth and

strength, that far transcend Gilpin, or professional writers on those subjects, is her record of a *first* tour in Scotland, made about the year 1802. This MS. book (unless my recollection of it, from a period now gone by for thirty years, has deceived me greatly) is absolutely unique in its class; and, though it never could be very popular, from the minuteness of its details, intelligible only to the eye, and the luxuriation of its descriptions, yet I believe no person has ever been favoured with a sight of it that has not yearned for its publication. Its own extraordinary merit, apart from the interest which *now* invests the name of Wordsworth, could not fail to procure purchasers for one edition on its first appearance.*

Coleridge was of the party at first; but afterwards, under some attack of rheumatism, found or thought it necessary to leave them. Melancholy it would be at this time, thirty-six years and more from the era of that tour, to read it under the afflicting remembrances of all which has been suffered in the interval by two at least out of the three who composed the travelling party; for I fear that Miss Wordsworth has suffered not much less than Coleridge, and, in any general expression of it, from the same cause, viz. an excess of pleasurable excitement and luxurious sensibility, sustained in youth by a constitutional glow from animal causes, but drooping as soon as that was withdrawn. It is painful to point a moral from any story connected with those whom one loves or has loved; painful to look for one moment towards any 'improvement' of such a case, especially where there is no reason to tax the parties with any criminal contribution to their own sufferings, except through that relaxation of the will and its potential energies through which most of us, at some time or other—I myself too deeply and sorrowfully—stand accountable to our own consciences. Not, therefore, with any intention of speaking in a monitorial or censorial character,† do I here notice a defect in Miss Wordsworth's self-education of something that might have mitigated the sort of suffering which, more or less, ever since the period of her too genial, too radiant youth, I

* Dorothy's manuscript was published in 1874: *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland, A.D. 1803*, ed. J. C. Shairp.

† *Tait's* interpolates: '[any] more [intention] . . . than, in passing, after dark, through Grasmere churchyard, and trespassing a little to the left, I could be supposed to have the intention of trampling upon the grave of one who lies buried near the pathway, and whom once I loved in extremity . . .'

suppose her to have struggled with. I have mentioned the narrow basis on which her literary interests had been made to rest—the exclusive character of her reading, and the utter want of pretension, and of all that looks like *bluestockingism*, in the style of her habitual conversation and mode of dealing with literature. Now, to me it appears, upon reflection, that it would have been far better had Miss Wordsworth condescended a little to the ordinary mode of pursuing literature; better for her own happiness if she *had* been a bluestocking; or, at least, if she had been, in good earnest, a writer for the press, with the pleasant cares and solitudes of one who has some little ventures, as it were, on that vast ocean.

We all know with how womanly and serene a temper literature has been pursued by Joanna Baillie, by Miss Mitford, and other women of admirable genius—with how absolutely no sacrifice or loss of feminine dignity they have cultivated the profession of authorship; and, if we could hear their report, I have no doubt that the little cares of correcting proofs, and the forward-looking solitudes connected with the mere business arrangements of new publications, would be numbered amongst the minor pleasures of life; whilst the more elevated cares connected with the intellectual business of such projects must inevitably have done much to solace the troubles which, as human beings, they cannot but have experienced, and even to scatter flowers upon their path. Mrs. Johnstone of Edinburgh has pursued the profession of literature—the noblest of professions, and the only one open to both sexes alike—with even more assiduity, and as a *daily* occupation; and, I have every reason to believe, with as much benefit to her own happiness as to the instruction and amusement of her readers; for the petty cares of authorship are agreeable, and its serious cares are ennobling. More especially is such an occupation useful to a woman without children, and without any *prospective* resources—resources in objects that involve hopes growing and unfulfilled. It is too much to expect of any woman (or man either) that her mind should support itself in a pleasurable activity, under the drooping energies of life, by resting on the past or on the present; some interest in reversion, some subject of hope from day to day, must be called in to reinforce the animal fountains of good spirits. Had that been opened for Miss Wordsworth, I am satisfied that she would have

passed a more cheerful middle-age, and would not, at any period, have yielded to that nervous depression (or is it, perhaps, nervous irritation?) which, I grieve to hear, has clouded her latter days. Nephews and nieces, whilst young and innocent, are as good almost as sons and daughters to a fervid and loving heart that has carried them in her arms from the hour they were born. But, after a nephew has grown into a huge hulk of a man, six feet high, and as stout as a bullock; after he has come to have children of his own, lives at a distance, and finds occasion to talk much of oxen and turnips—no offence to him!—he ceases to be an object of any very profound sentiment. There is nothing in such a subject to rouse the flagging pulses of the heart, and to sustain a fervid spirit, to whom, at the very best, human life offers little of an adequate or sufficing interest, unless when idealized by the magic of the mighty poets. Farewell, Miss Wordsworth! farewell, impassioned Dorothy! I have not seen you for many a day—shall, too probably, never see you again; but shall attend your steps with tender interest so long as I hear of you living: so will Professor Wilson; and, from two hearts at least, that knew and admired you in your fervid prime, it may sometimes cheer the gloom of your depression to be assured of never-failing remembrance, full of love and respectful pity.*

* *Tait's* continues: 'Here ceases my record of the life and its main incidents, so far as they are known to me, of William Wordsworth, to which, on account of the important services which she has rendered him, on account of the separate interest which, apart from these services, belongs to her own mind and character, on account of the singular counterpart which in some features they offer to those of her brother; and, on account of the impressive coincidence and parallelism in this remarkable dedication of Dorothy to William Wordsworth, with that of Mary to Charles Lamb—I have thought that it would be a proper *complement* of the whole record, to subjoin a very especial notice of his sister. Miss Wordsworth would have merited a separate notice in any biographical dictionary of our times, had there even been no William Wordsworth in existence

'I have traced this history of each until the time when I became personally acquainted with them; and, henceforwards, anything which it may be interesting to know with respect to either, will naturally come forward, not in a separate narrative, but in connexion with my own life, for, in the following year, I became myself the tenant of that pretty cottage in which I found them; and from that time, for many years, my life flowed on in daily union with theirs.'

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND ROBERT SOUTHEY *

From 1807 to 1830

BY THE ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER

THAT night—the first of my personal intercourse with Wordsworth—the first in which I saw him face to face—was (it is little, indeed, to say) memorable: it was marked by a change even in the physical condition of my nervous system. Long disappointment—hope for ever baffled, (and why should it be less painful because *self-baffled*?)—vexation and self-blame, almost self-contempt, at my own want of courage to face the man whom of all since the Flood I most yearned to behold:—these feelings had impressed upon my nervous sensibilities a character of irritation—agitation—restlessness—eternal self-dissatisfaction—which were gradually gathering into a distinct, well-defined type, that would, but for youth—almighty youth, and the spirit of youth—have shaped itself into some nervous complaint, wearing symptoms *sui generis*, (for most nervous complaints, in minds that are at all eccentric, will be *sui generis*;) and, perhaps, finally, have been immortalized in some medical journal as the anomalous malady of an interesting young gentleman, aged twenty-two, who was supposed to have studied too severely, and to have perplexed his brain with German metaphysics. To this result things tended; but, in one hour, all passed away. It was gone, never to return. The spiritual being whom I had anticipated—for, like Eloise,

‘My fancy fram’d him of th’ angelic kind—
Some emanation of th’ all-beauteous mind’—

this ideal creature had, at length, been seen—seen ‘in the flesh’—seen with fleshly eyes; and now, though he did not cease for years

* From *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, July 1839.

to wear something of the glory and the *aureola* which, in Popish legends, invests the head of superhuman beings, yet it was no longer as a being to be feared—it was as Raphael, the ‘affable’ angel, who conversed on the terms of man with man, that I now regarded him.

It was four o’clock, perhaps, when we arrived. At that hour the daylight soon declined; and, in an hour and a half, we were all collected about the tea-table. This, with the Wordsworths, under the simple rustic system of habits which they cherished then, and for twenty years after, was the most delightful meal in the day; just as dinner is in great cities, and for the same reason—because it was prolonged into a meal of leisure and conversation. And the reason why any meal favours and encourages conversation is pretty much the same as that which accounts for the breaking down of so many lawyers, and generally their ill-success, in the House of Commons. In the courts of law, when a man is haranguing upon general and abstract topics, if at any moment, he feels getting beyond his depth, if he finds his anchor driving, he can always bring up, and drop his anchor anew upon the *terra firma* of his case: the facts of this, as furnished by his brief, always assure him of a retreat as soon as he finds his more general thoughts failing him; and the consciousness of this retreat, by inspiring confidence, makes it much less probable that they *should* fail. But, in Parliament, where the advantage of a case with given facts and circumstances, or the details of a statistical report, does not offer itself once in a dozen times that a member has occasion to speak—where he has to seek unpremeditated arguments and reasonings of a general nature, from the impossibility of wholly evading the previous speeches that may have made an impression upon the House;—this necessity, at any rate a trying one to most people, is doubly so to one who has always walked in the leading-strings of a *case*—always swam with the help of bladders, in the conscious resource of his *facts*. The reason, therefore, why a lawyer succeeds ill as a senator, is to be found in the sudden removal of an artificial aid. Now, just such an artificial aid is furnished to timid or to unready men by a dinner-table, and the miscellaneous attentions, courtesies, or occupations which it enjoins or permits, as by the fixed memoranda of a brief. If a man finds the ground slipping from beneath him in a discussion—if, in a tide of illustration, he suddenly comes to a pause for want of

matter—he can make a graceful close, a self-interruption, that shall wear the interpretation of forbearance, or even win the rhetorical credit of an *aposiopesis*, (according to circumstances,) by stopping to perform a duty of the occasion: pressed into a dilemma by some political partisan, one may evade it by pressing him to take a little of the dish before one; or, plagued for a reason which is not forthcoming, one may deprecate this logical rigour by inviting one's tormentor to wine. In short, what I mean to say is, that a dinner party, or any meal which is made the meal for intellectual relaxation, must for ever offer the advantages of a *palæstra*, in which the weapons are foils and the wounds not mortal: in which, whilst the interest is that of a real, the danger is that of a sham fight: in which, whilst there is always an opportunity for swimming into deep waters, there is always a retreat into shallow ones. And it may be laid down as a maxim, that no nation is civilized to the height of its capacity until it *has* one such meal. With our ancestors of sixty years back, this meal was supper: with the Athenians and Greeks it was dinner,¹ (cœna and δεῖπνον,) as with ourselves; only that the hour was a very early one, in consequence, partly, of the early bedtime of these nations, (which again was occasioned by the dearth of candle-light to the mass of those who had political rights, on whose account the forensic meetings, the visits of clients to their patrons, etc., opened the political day by four hours earlier than with us,) and partly in consequence of the uncommercial habits of the ancients—commerce having at no time created an aristocracy of its own, and, therefore, having at no time and in no city (no, not Alexandria nor Carthage) dictated the household and social arrangements, or the distribution of its hours.

I have been led insensibly into this digression. I now resume the thread of my narrative. That night, after hearing conversation superior by much, in its tone and subject, to any which I had ever heard before—one exception only being made, in favour of

¹ A curious dissertation might be written on this subject. Meantime, it is remarkable that almost all modern nations have committed the blunder of supposing the Latin word for *supper* to be cœna, and of dinner, *prandium*. Now, the essential definition of dinner is, that which is the main meal—(what the French call the great meal). By that or any test, (for example, the *time*, three P.M.) the Roman cœna was dinner. Even Louis XII., whose death is partly ascribed to his having altered his dinner hour from nine to eleven A.M. in compliment to his young English bride, did not *sup* at three P.M. [Q.]

Coleridge, whose style differed from Wordsworth's in this, that being far more agile and more comprehensive, consequently more showy and surprising, it was less impressive and weighty; for Wordsworth's was slow in its movement, solemn, majestic. After a luxury so rare as this, I found myself, about eleven at night, in a pretty bedroom, about fourteen feet by twelve. Much I feared that this might turn out the best room in the house; and it illustrates the hospitality of my new friends, to mention that it was. Early in the morning, I was awoken by a little voice, issuing from a little cottage bed in an opposite corner, soliloquizing in a low tone. I soon recognized the words—'Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried'; and the voice I easily conjectured to be that of the eldest amongst Wordsworth's children, a son, and at that time about three years old. He was a remarkably fine boy in strength and size, promising (which has in fact been realized) a much more powerful person, physically, than that of his father. Miss Wordsworth I found making breakfast in the little sitting-room. No urn was there; no glittering breakfast service; a kettle boiled upon the fire, and everything was in harmony with these unpretending arrangements. I, the son of a merchant, and naturally, therefore, in the midst of luxurious (though not ostentatious) display from my childhood, had never seen so humble a *ménage*: and contrasting the dignity of the man with this honourable poverty, and this courageous avowal of it, his utter absence of all effort to disguise the simple truth of the case, I felt my admiration increase to the uttermost by all I saw. This, thought I to myself, is, indeed, in his own words—

'Plain living, and high thinking.'

This is indeed to reserve the humility and the parsimonies of life for its bodily enjoyments, and to apply its lavishness and its luxury to its enjoyments of the intellect. So might Milton have lived; so Marvel. Throughout the day—which was rainy—the same style of modest hospitality prevailed. Wordsworth and his sister—myself being of the party—walked out in spite of the rain, and made the circuit of the two lakes, Grasmere and its dependency Rydal—a walk of about six miles. On the third day, Mrs. Coleridge having now pursued her journey northward to Keswick, and having, at her departure, invited me, in her own name as well

as Southey's, to come and see them, Wordsworth proposed that we should go thither in company, but not by the direct route—a distance of only thirteen miles: this we were to take in our road homeward; our outward-bound journey was to be by way of Ulleswater—a circuit of forty-three miles.

On the third morning after my arrival in Grasmere, I found the whole family, except the two children, prepared for the expedition across the mountains. I had heard of no horses, and took it for granted that we were to walk; however, at the moment of starting, a cart—the common farmers' cart of the country—made its appearance; and the driver was a bonny young woman of the vale. Such a vehicle I had never in my life seen used for such a purpose; but what was good enough for the Wordsworths was good enough for me; and, accordingly, we were all carted along to the little town, or large village, of Ambleside—three and a half miles distant. Our style of travelling occasioned no astonishment; on the contrary, we met a smiling salutation wherever we appeared—Miss Wordsworth being, as I observed, the person most familiarly known of our party, and the one who took upon herself the whole expenses of the flying colloquies exchanged with stragglers on the road. What struck me with most astonishment, however, was the liberal manner of our fair driver, who made no scruple of taking a leap, with the reins in her hand, and seating herself dexterously upon the shafts (or, in Westmoreland phrase, the *trams*) of the cart. From Ambleside—and without one foot of intervening flat ground—begins to rise the famous ascent of Kirkstone; after which, for three long miles, all riding in a cart drawn by one horse becomes impossible. The ascent is computed at three miles, but is, probably, a little more. In some parts it is almost frightfully steep; for the road being only the original mountain track of shepherds, gradually widened and improved from age to age, (especially since the era of tourists began,) is carried over ground which no engineer, even in alpine countries, would have viewed as practicable. In ascending, this is felt chiefly as an obstruction and not as a peril, unless where there is a risk of the horses backing; but in the reverse order, some of these precipitous descents are terrific: and yet, once in utter darkness, after midnight, and the darkness irradiated only by continual streams of lightning, I was driven down this whole descent, at a full gallop, by a young woman—the carriage being a light one, the

horses frightened, and the descents, at some critical parts of the road, so literally like the sides of a house, that it was difficult to keep the fore wheels from pressing upon the hind legs of the horses. Indeed, this is only according to the custom of the country, as I have before mentioned. The innkeeper of Ambleside, or Lowwood, will not mount this formidable hill without four horses. The leaders you are not required to take beyond the first three miles; but, of course, they are glad if you will take them on the whole stage of nine miles, to Patterdale; and, in that case, there is a real luxury at hand for those who enjoy velocity of motion. The descent into Patterdale is much above two miles; but such is the propensity for flying down hills in Westmoreland that I have found the descent accomplished in about six minutes, which is at the rate of eighteen miles an hour; the various turnings of the road making the speed much more sensible to the traveller. The pass, at the summit of this ascent, is nothing to be compared in sublimity with the pass under Great Gavi from Wastdalehead; but it is solemn, and profoundly impressive. At a height so awful as this, it may be easily supposed that all human dwellings have been long left behind: no sound of human life, no bells of churches or chapels ever ascend so far. And, as is noticed in Wordsworth's fine stanzas upon this memorable pass, the only sound that, even in noonday, disturbs the sleep of the weary pedestrian, is that of the bee murmuring amongst the mountain flowers—a sound as ancient

'As man's imperial front, and woman's roseate bloom.'

This way, and (which, to the sentiment of the case, is an important point) this way, *of necessity and inevitably*, passed the Roman legions; for it is a mathematic impossibility that any other route could be found for an army nearer to the eastward of this pass than by way of Kendal and Shap; nearer to the westward, than by way of Legberthwaite and St. John's Vale, (and so by Threlkeld to Penrith). Now, these two roads are exactly twenty-five miles apart; and, since a Roman cohort was stationed at Ambleside (*Amboglana*), it is pretty evident that this cohort would not correspond with the more northerly stations by either of these remote routes—having immediately before it this direct though difficult pass of Kirkstone. On the solitary area of tableland which you find at the summit—though, heaven knows, you might almost

cover it with a drawing-room carpet, so suddenly does the mountain take to its old trick of precipitous descent, on both sides alike—there are only two objects to remind you of man and his workmanship. One is a guide-post—always a picturesque and interesting object, because it expresses a wild country and a labyrinth of roads, and often made much more interesting (as in this case) by the lichens which cover it, and which record the generations of men to whom it has done its office; as also by the crucifix form which inevitably recalls, in all mountainous regions, the crosses of Catholic lands, raised to the memory of wayfaring men who have perished by the hand of the assassin. The other memorial of man is even more interesting:—Amongst the fragments of rock which lie in the confusion of a ruin on each side of the road, one there is which exceeds the rest in height, and which, in shape, presents a very close resemblance to a church. This lies to the left of the road as you are going from Ambleside; and, from its name, Churchstone (Kirkstone,) is derived the name of the pass, and from the pass the name of the mountain. The guide-post—which was really the work of man—tells those going southwards (for to those who go northwards it is useless, since, in that direction, there is no choice of roads) that the left hand track conducts you to Troutbeck, and Bowness, and Kendal; the right hand to Ambleside, and Hawkshead, and Ulverstone. The church—which is but a phantom of man's handiwork—might, however, really be mistaken for such, were it not that the rude and almost inaccessible state of the adjacent ground proclaims the truth. As to size, *that* is remarkably difficult to estimate upon wild heaths or mountain solitudes, where there are no leadings through gradations of distance, nor any artificial standards, from which height or breadth can be properly deduced. This mimic church, however, has a peculiarly fine effect in this wild situation, which leaves so far below the tumults of this world: the phantom church, by suggesting the phantom and evanescent image of a congregation, where never congregation met; of the pealing organ, where never sound was heard except of wild natural notes, or else of the wind rushing through these mighty gates of everlasting rock—in this way, the fanciful image that accompanies the traveller on his road, for half a mile or more, serves to bring out the antagonist feeling of intense and awful solitude, which is the natural and presiding sentiment—the *religio loci*—that broods for ever over the romantic pass.

Having walked up Kirkstone, we ascended our cart again; then rapidly descended to Brothers' Water—a lake which lies immediately below; and, about three miles further, through endless woods and under the shade of mighty fells, immediate dependencies and processes of the still more mighty Helvellyn, we approached the vale of Patterdale, when, by moonlight, we reached the inn. Here we found horses—by whom furnished I never asked nor heard; perhaps I owe somebody for a horse to this day. All I remember is—that through those most romantic woods and rocks of Stybarrow—through those silent glens of Glencoin and Glenridding—through that most romantic of parks then belonging to the Duke of Norfolk, viz. Gobarow Park—we saw alternately, for four miles, the most grotesque and the most awful spectacles—

‘Abbey windows

And Moorish temples of the Hindoos,’

all fantastic, all as unreal and shadowy as the moonlight which created them; whilst, at every angle of the road, broad gleams came upwards of Ulleswater, stretching for nine miles northward, but, fortunately for its effect, broken into three watery chambers of almost equal length, and rarely visible at once. At the foot of the lake, in a house called Ewsmere, we passed the night, having accomplished about twenty-two miles only in our day's walking and riding. The next day Wordsworth and I, leaving at Ewsmere, the rest of our party, spent the morning in roaming through the woods of Lowther; and, towards evening, we dined together at Emont Bridge, one mile short of Penrith. Afterwards, we walked into Penrith. There Wordsworth left me in excellent quarters—the house of Captain Wordsworth, from which the family happened to be absent. Whither he himself adjourned, I know not, nor on what business; however, it occupied him throughout the next day; and, therefore, I employed myself in sauntering along the road, about seventeen miles, to Keswick. There I had been directed to ask for Greta Hall, which, with some little difficulty, I found; for it stands out of the town a few hundred yards, upon a little eminence overhanging the river Greta. It was about seven o'clock when I reached Southey's door; for I had stopped to dine at a little public house in Threlkeld, and had walked slowly for the last two hours in the dark. The arrival of a stranger occasioned a little sensation in the house; and, by

the time the front door could be opened, I saw Mrs. Coleridge, and a gentleman whom I could not doubt to be Southey, standing, very hospitably, to greet my entrance. Southey was, in person, somewhat taller than Wordsworth, being about five feet eleven in height, or a trifle more, whilst Wordsworth was about five feet ten; and, partly from having slenderer limbs, partly from being more symmetrically formed about the shoulders than Wordsworth, he struck one as a better and lighter figure, to the effect of which his dress contributed; for he wore pretty constantly a short jacket and pantaloons, and had much the air of a Tyrolese mountaineer. On the next day arrived Wordsworth. I could read at once, in the manner of the two authors, that they were not on particularly friendly, or rather, I should say, confidential terms. It seemed to me as if both had silently said—we are too much men of sense to quarrel, because we do not happen particularly to like each other's writings: we are neighbours, or what passes for such in the country. Let us show each other the courtesies which are becoming to men of letters; and, for any closer connection, our distance of thirteen miles may be always sufficient to keep us from *that*. In after life, it is true—fifteen years, perhaps, from this time—many circumstances combined to bring Southey and Wordsworth into more intimate terms of friendship: agreement in politics, sorrows which had happened to both alike in their domestic relations, and the sort of tolerance for different opinions in literature, or, indeed, in anything else, which advancing years and experience are sure to bring with them. But at this period, Southey and Wordsworth entertained a mutual esteem, but did not cordially like each other. Indeed, it would have been odd if they had. Wordsworth lived in the open air: Southey in his library, which Coleridge used to call his wife. Southey had particularly elegant habits (Wordsworth called them finical) in the use of books. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was so negligent, and so self-indulgent in the same case, that as Southey, laughing, expressed it to me some years afterwards, when I was staying at Greta Hall on a visit—'To introduce Wordsworth into one's library, is like letting a bear into a tulip garden.' What I mean by self-indulgent is this: generally it happens that new books baffle and mock one's curiosity by their uncut leaves; and the trial is pretty much the same, as when, in some town, where you are utterly unknown, you meet the postman at a distance

from your inn, with some letter for yourself from a dear, dear friend in foreign regions, without money to pay the postage. How is it with you, dear reader, in such a case? Are you not tempted (*I am* grievously) to snatch the letter from his tantalizing hand, spite of the roar which you anticipate of 'Stop thief!' and make off as fast as you can for some solitary street in the suburbs, where you may instantly effect an entrance upon your new estate before the purchase money is paid down? Such were Wordsworth's feelings in regard to new books; of which the first exemplification I had was early in my acquaintance with him, and on occasion of a book which (if any could) justified the too summary style of his advances in rifling its charms. On a level with the eye, when sitting at the tea-table in my little cottage at Grasmere, stood the collective works of Edmund Burke. The book was to me an eye-sore and an ear-sore for many a year, in consequence of the cacophonous title lettered by the bookseller upon the back—'Burke's Works.' I have heard it said, by the way, that Donne's intolerable defect of ear grew out of his own baptismal name, when harnessed to his own surname—*John Donne*. No man, it was said, who had listened to this hideous jingle from childish years, could fail to have his genius for discord, and the abominable in sound, improved to the utmost. Not less dreadful than *John Donne* was 'Burke's Works'; which, however, on the old principle, that every day's work is no day's work, continued to annoy me for twenty-one years. Wordsworth took down the volume; unfortunately it was uncut; fortunately, and by a special Providence as to him, it seemed, tea was proceeding at the time. Dry toast required butter; butter required knives; and knives then lay on the table; but sad it was for the virgin purity of Mr. Burke's as yet unsunned pages, that every knife bore upon its blade testimonies of the service it had rendered. Did *that* stop Wordsworth? Did that cause him to call for another knife? Not at all; he

'Look'd at the knife that caus'd his pain:

And look'd and sigh'd, and look'd and sigh'd again';

and then, after this momentary tribute to regret, he tore his way into the heart of the volume with this knife that left its greasy honours behind it upon every page: and are they not there to this day? This personal experience just brought me acquainted with Wordsworth's habits, and that particular, especially, with his

the time the front door could be opened, I saw Mrs. Coleridge, and a gentleman whom I could not doubt to be Southey, standing, very hospitably, to greet my entrance. Southey was, in person, somewhat taller than Wordsworth, being about five feet eleven in height, or a trifle more, whilst Wordsworth was about five feet ten; and, partly from having slenderer limbs, partly from being more symmetrically formed about the shoulders than Wordsworth, he struck one as a better and lighter figure, to the effect of which his dress contributed; for he wore pretty constantly a short jacket and pantaloons, and had much the air of a Tyrolese mountaineer. On the next day arrived Wordsworth. I could read at once, in the manner of the two authors, that they were not on particularly friendly, or rather, I should say, confidential terms. It seemed to me as if both had silently said—we are too much men of sense to quarrel, because we do not happen particularly to like each other's writings: we are neighbours, or what passes for such in the country. Let us show each other the courtesies which are becoming to men of letters; and, for any closer connection, our distance of thirteen miles may be always sufficient to keep us from *that*. In after life, it is true—fifteen years, perhaps, from this time—many circumstances combined to bring Southey and Wordsworth into more intimate terms of friendship: agreement in politics, sorrows which had happened to both alike in their domestic relations, and the sort of tolerance for different opinions in literature, or, indeed, in anything else, which advancing years and experience are sure to bring with them. But at this period, Southey and Wordsworth entertained a mutual esteem, but did not cordially like each other. Indeed, it would have been odd if they had. Wordsworth lived in the open air: Southey in his library, which Coleridge used to call his wife. Southey had particularly elegant habits (Wordsworth called them finical) in the use of books. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was so negligent, and so self-indulgent in the same case, that as Southey, laughing, expressed it to me some years afterwards, when I was staying at Greta Hall on a visit—'To introduce Wordsworth into one's library, is like letting a bear into a tulip garden.' What I mean by self-indulgent is this: generally it happens that new books baffle and mock one's curiosity by their uncut leaves; and the trial is pretty much the same, as when, in some town, where you are utterly unknown, you meet the postman at a distance

heard many profound remarks that would inevitably fall from his lips.' Nay, Coleridge had also been of the party; and, if Wordsworth *solus* could have been dull, was it within human possibilities that these *gemini* should have been so? 'Was it possible?' I said; and, perhaps, my donkey, who looked like one that had been immoderately threatened, at last took courage; his eye brightened; and he intimated that he *did* remember something that Wordsworth had said—an 'observe,' as the Scotch call it.

'Ay, indeed; and what was it now? What did the great man say?'

'Why, sir, in fact, and to make a long story short, on coming near to London, we breakfasted at Baldock—you know Baldock? It's in Hertfordshire. Well, now, sir, would you believe it, though we were quite in regular time, the breakfast was precisely good for nothing?'

'And Wordsworth?'

'He observed——'

'What did he observe?'

'That the buttered toast looked, for all the world, as if it had been soaked in hot water.'

Ye heavens! '*buttered toast!*' And was it *this* I waited for? Now, thought I, had Henry Mackenzie been breakfasting with Wordsworth, at Baldock, (and, strange enough! in years to come I *did* breakfast with Henry Mackenzie, for the solitary time I ever met him, and at Wordsworth's house, in Rydal,) he would have carried off one sole reminiscence from the meeting—namely, a confirmation of his creed, that we English are all dedicated, from our very cradle, to the luxuries of the palate, and peculiarly to this.¹ *Proh pudor!* Yet, in sad sincerity, Wordsworth's pencil-notice in books were quite as disappointing. In Roderick Random, for example, I found a note upon a certain luscious description, to the effect 'that such things should be left to the

¹ It is not known to the English, but it is a fact which I can vouch for, from my six or seven years' residence in Scotland, that the Scotch, one and all, believe it to be an inalienable characteristic of an Englishman to be fond of good eating. What indignation have I, and how many a time, had occasion to feel and utter on this subject? But of this at some other time. Meantime, the Man of Feeling had this creed in excess, and, in some paper, (of *The Mirror* or *The Lounger*,) he describes an English tourist in Scotland by saying—'I would not wish to be thought national, yet, in mere reverence for truth, I am bound to say, and to declare to all the world, (let who will be offended,) that the first innkeeper in Scotland under whose roof we met with genuine buttered toast, was an Englishman.' [Q.]

the time the front door could be opened, I saw Mrs. Coleridge, and a gentleman whom I could not doubt to be Southey, standing, very hospitably, to greet my entrance. Southey was, in person, somewhat taller than Wordsworth, being about five feet eleven in height, or a trifle more, whilst Wordsworth was about five feet ten; and, partly from having slenderer limbs, partly from being more symmetrically formed about the shoulders than Wordsworth, he struck one as a better and lighter figure, to the effect of which his dress contributed; for he wore pretty constantly a short jacket and pantaloons, and had much the air of a Tyrolese mountaineer. On the next day arrived Wordsworth. I could read at once, in the manner of the two authors, that they were not on particularly friendly, or rather, I should say, confidential terms. It seemed to me as if both had silently said—we are too much men of sense to quarrel, because we do not happen particularly to like each other's writings: we are neighbours, or what passes for such in the country. Let us show each other the courtesies which are becoming to men of letters; and, for any closer connection, our distance of thirteen miles may be always sufficient to keep us from *that*. In after life, it is true—fifteen years, perhaps, from this time—many circumstances combined to bring Southey and Wordsworth into more intimate terms of friendship: agreement in politics, sorrows which had happened to both alike in their domestic relations, and the sort of tolerance for different opinions in literature, or, indeed, in anything else, which advancing years and experience are sure to bring with them. But at this period, Southey and Wordsworth entertained a mutual esteem, but did not cordially like each other. Indeed, it would have been odd if they had. Wordsworth lived in the open air: Southey in his library, which Coleridge used to call his wife. Southey had particularly elegant habits (Wordsworth called them finical) in the use of books. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was so negligent, and so self-indulgent in the same case, that as Southey, laughing, expressed it to me some years afterwards, when I was staying at Greta Hall on a visit—'To introduce Wordsworth into one's library, is like letting a bear into a tulip garden.' What I mean by self-indulgent is this: generally it happens that new books baffle and mock one's curiosity by their uncut leaves; and the trial is pretty much the same, as when, in some town, where you are utterly unknown, you meet the postman at a distance

and, as it happened that every one of his friends far exceeded him in this point, curiously felicitous was the explanation which he gave of this superfluous case, so as to bring it within the natural operation of some known fact in the man's peculiar situation. Southey (he was by nature something of an old bachelor) had his house filled with pretty articles—*bijouterie*, and so forth; and, naturally, he wished his books to be kept up to the same level—burnished and bright for show. Sir George Beaumont—this peculiarly elegant and accomplished man—was an old and most affectionate friend of Wordsworth's. Sir George Beaumont never had any children: if he had been so blessed, they, by familiarizing him with the spectacle of books ill used—stained, torn, mutilated, etc.—would have lowered the standard of his requisitions. The short solution of the whole case was—and it illustrated the nature of his education—he had never lived in a regular family at a time when habits are moulded. From boyhood to manhood he had been *sui iuris*.

Returning to Southey and Greta Hall, both the house and the master may deserve a few words more of description. For the master, I have already sketched his person; and his face I profess myself unable to describe accurately. His hair was black, and yet his complexion was fair; his eyes I believe to be hazel and large; but I will not vouch for that fact: his nose aquiline; and he has a remarkable habit of looking up into the air, as if looking at abstractions. The expression of his face was that of a very acute and aspiring man. So far, it was even noble, as it conveyed a feeling of a serene and gentle pride, habitually familiar with elevating subjects of contemplation. And yet it was impossible that this pride could have been offensive to anybody, chastened as it was by the most unaffected modesty; and this modesty made evident and prominent by the constant expression of reverence for the great men of the age, (when he happened to esteem them such,) and for all the great patriarchs of our literature. The point in which Southey's manner failed the most in conciliating regard, was, in all which related to the external expressions of friendliness. No man could be more sincerely hospitable—no man more essentially disposed to give up even his time (the possession which he most valued) to the service of his friends. But there was an air of reserve and distance about him—the reserve of a lofty, self-respecting mind, but, perhaps, a little too freezing—in his

treatment of all persons who were not among the *corps* of his ancient fireside friends. Still, even towards the veriest strangers, it is but justice to notice his extreme courtesy in sacrificing his literary employments for the day, whatever they might be, to the duty (for such he made it) of doing the honours of the lake, and the adjacent mountains.

Southey was at that time, (1807,) and has continued ever since, the most industrious of all literary men on record. A certain task he prescribed to himself every morning before breakfast. This could not be a very long one, for he breakfasted at nine, or soon after, and *never* rose before eight, though he went to bed duly at half-past ten; but, as I have many times heard him say, less than nine hours' sleep he found insufficient. From breakfast to a latish dinner (about half after five or six) was his main period of literary toil. After dinner, according to the accident of having or not having visitors in the house, he sate over his wine; or he retired to his library again, from which, about eight, he was summoned to tea. But, generally speaking, he closed his *literary* toils at dinner; the whole of the hours after that meal being dedicated to his correspondence. This, it may be supposed, was unusually large, to occupy so much of his time, for his letters rarely extended to any length. At that period, the post, by way of Penrith, reached Keswick about six or seven in the evening. And so pointedly regular was Southey in all his habits that, short as the time was, all letters were answered on the same evening which brought them. At tea he read the London papers. It was perfectly astonishing to men of less methodical habits, to find how much he got through of elaborate business by his unvarying system of arrangement in the distribution of his time. We often hear it said, in accounts of pattern ladies and gentlemen, (what Coleridge used contemptuously to style *goody* people,) that they found time for everything; that business never interrupted pleasure; that labours of love and charity never stood in the way of courtesy or personal enjoyment. This is easy to say—easy to put down as one feature of an imaginary portrait: but I must say, that in actual life I have seen few such cases. Southey, however, *did* find time for everything. It moved the sneers of some people, that even his poetry was composed according to a predetermined rule; that so many lines should be produced, by contract, as it were, before breakfast; so many at such another definite interval. And I acknowledge,

that so far I went along with the sneerers, as to marvel exceedingly how that *could* be possible. But if, *a priori*, one laughed and expected to see verses corresponding to this mechanic rule of construction, *a posteriori* one was bound to judge of the verses as one found them. Supposing them good, they were entitled to honour, no matter for the previous reasons which made it possible that they would *not* be good. And generally, however undubitably they *ought* to have been bad, the world has pronounced them good. In fact they *are* good; and the sole objection to them is, that they are too intensely *objective*—too much reflect the mind, as spreading itself out upon external things—too little exhibit the mind, as introverting itself upon its own thoughts and feelings. This, however, is an objection, which only seems to limit the range of the poetry—and all poetry *is* limited in its range: none comprehends more than a section of the human power. Mean-time, the prose of Southey was that by which he lived. 'The Quarterly Review' it was by which, as he expressed it to myself in 1810, he '*made the pot boil*.' * About the same time, possibly as early as 1808, (for I think that I remember in that Journal an account of the Battle of Vimiera,) Southey was engaged by an Edinburgh publisher, (Constable, was it not?) † to write the entire historical part of 'The Edinburgh Annual Register,' at a salary of £400 per annum. Afterwards, the publisher, who was intensely national, and, doubtless, never from the first cordially relished the notion of importing English aid into a city teeming with briefless barristers and variety of talent, threw out a hint that perhaps he might reduce the salary to £300. Just about this time I happened to see Southey, who said laughingly—'If the man of Edinburgh does this, I shall *strike* for an advance of wages.' I presume that he *did* strike, and, like many other 'operatives,' without effect. Those who work for lower wages during a strike are called *snobs*,¹ the men who stand out being *nobs*. Southey became a resolute nob; but some snob was found in Edinburgh, some youthful advocate, who accepted £300 per

¹ See the Evidence before the House of Commons' Committee. [Q.]

* In his revised edition De Quincey added 'One single paper, for instance—viz. a review of Nelson's life, which subsequently was expanded into his very popular little book on that subject—brought him the splendid honorarium of £150.'

† *The Edinburgh Annual Register* was a venture of the Ballantynes.

annum, and thenceforward Southey lost this part of his income. I once possessed the whole work; and in one part, viz. 'The Domestic Chronicle,' I know that it is executed with a most culpable carelessness—the beginnings of cases being given without the ends, the ends without the beginnings—a defect but too common in public journals. The credit of the work, however, was staked upon its treatment of the current public history of Europe, and the tone of its politics in times so full of agitation, and teeming with new births in every year, some fated to prove abortive, but others bearing golden promises for the human race. Now, whatever might be the talent with which Southey's successor performed his duty, there was a loss in one point for which no talent of mere execution could make amends. The very prejudices of Southey tended to unity of feeling: they were in harmony with each other, and grew out of a strong moral feeling, which is the one sole secret for giving interest to an historical narration, fusing the incoherent details into one body, and carrying the reader fluently along the else monotonous recurrences and unmeaning details of military movements. Well or ill directed, a strong moral feeling, and a profound sympathy with elementary justice, is that which creates a soul under what else may well be denominated, Miltonically, 'the ribs of death.' Now, this, and a mind already made up even to obstinacy upon all public questions, were the peculiar qualifications which Southey brought to the task—qualifications not to be bought in any market, not to be compensated by any amount of mere intellectual talent, and almost impossible as the qualifications of a much younger man. As a pecuniary loss, though considerable, Southey was not unable to support it; for he had a pension from Government before this time, and under the following circumstances:—Charles Wynne, the brother of Sir Watkin, the great autocrat of North Wales—that C. W. who is almost equally well known for his knowledge of Parliamentary usage, which pointed him out to the notice of the House as an eligible person to fill the office of speaker, and for his unfortunately shrill voice, which chiefly it was that defeated his claim¹—(in fact, as is universally

¹ Sir Watkin, the elder brother, had a tongue too large for his mouth; Mr. C. Wynne, the younger, had a shrill voice, which at times rose into a scream. It became, therefore, a natural and current jest, to call the two brothers by the name of a well-known dish, viz., *bubble and squeak*. [Q.]

known, his brother and he, for different defects of voice and utterance, are called *Bubble and Squeak*)—this C. W. had believed himself to have been deeply indebted to Southey's high-toned moral example, and to his wise counsels, during the time when both were students at Oxford, for the fortunate direction given to his own wavering impulses. This sense of obligation he endeavoured to express, by settling a pension upon Southey from his own funds. At length, upon the death of Mr. Pitt, early in 1806, an opening was made for the Fox and Grenville parties to come into office. Charles Wynn as a person connected by marriage with the house of Grenville, and united with them in political opinions, shared in the golden shower; he also received a place; and, upon the strength of his improving prospects, he married: upon which it occurred to Southey, that it was no longer right to tax the funds of one who was now called upon to support an establishment becoming his rank. Under that impression, he threw up his pension; and upon *their* part, to express their sense of what they considered a delicate and honourable sacrifice, the Grenvilles placed Southey upon the national pension list.

What might be the exact colour of Southey's political creed in this year, 1807, it is difficult to say. The great revolution, in his way of thinking upon such subjects, with which he has been so often upbraided as something equal in delinquency to a deliberate tergiversation or moral apostasy, could not have then taken place; and of this I am sure, from the following little anecdote connected with this visit:—On the day after my own arrival at Greta Hall, came Wordsworth following upon my steps from Penrith. We dined and passed that evening with Mr. Southey. The next morning, after breakfast, previously to leaving Keswick, we were sitting in Southey's library; and he was discussing with Wordsworth the aspect of public affairs: for my part, I was far too diffident to take any part in such a conversation, for I had no opinions at all upon politics, nor any interest in public affairs, further than that I had a keen sympathy with the national honour, gloried in the name of Englishman, and had been bred up in a frenzied horror of jacobinism. Not having been old enough, at the first outbreak of the French Revolution, to participate (as else, undoubtedly, I should have done) in the golden hopes of its early dawn, my first youthful introduction to foreign politics had been in seasons and circumstances that

taught me to approve of all I heard in abhorrence of French excesses, and to worship the name of Pitt; otherwise my whole heart had been so steadily fixed on a different world from the world of our daily experience that, for some years, I had never looked into a newspaper; nor, if I cared something for the movement made by nations from year to year, did I care one iota for their movement from week to week. Still, careless as I was on these subjects, it sounded as a novelty to me, and one which I had not dreamed of as a possibility, to hear men of education and liberal pursuits—men, besides, whom I regarded as so elevated in mind, and one of them as a person charmed and consecrated from error—giving utterance to sentiments which seemed absolutely disloyal. Yet now did I hear—and I heard with an emotion of sorrow, but a sorrow that instantly gave way to a conviction that it was myself who lay under a delusion, and simply because

—— ‘from Abelard it came’——

opinions avowed most hostile to the reigning family; not personally to them, but generally to a monarchical form of government. And that I could not be mistaken in my impression, that my memory cannot have played me false, is evident, from one relic of the conversation which rested upon my ear and has survived to this day—thirty and two years from the time. It had been agreed, that no good was to be hoped for, as respected England, until the royal family should be expatriated; and Southey, jestingly considering to what country they could be exiled, with mutual benefit for that country and themselves, had supposed the case—that, with a large allowance of money, such as might stimulate beneficially the industry of a rising colony, they should be transported to New South Wales; which project, amusing his fancy, he had, with the readiness and facility that characterizes his mind, thrown *extempore* into verse; speaking off, as an improvisatore, about eight or ten lines, of which the three last I perfectly remember, and they were these, (by the way I should have mentioned, that they took the form of a petition addressed to the King:—)

‘Therefore, old George, by George we pray
Of thee forthwith to extend thy sway
Over the great Botanic Bay.’

The sole doubt I have about the exact words regard the second line, which might have been (according to a various reading which equally clings to my ear)—

‘That thou would’st please t’ extend thy sway.’

But about the last I cannot be wrong; for I remember laughing with a sense of something peculiarly droll in the substitution of the stilted phrase—‘*the great Botanic Bay*,’ for our ordinary weekday name *Botany Bay*, so redolent of thieves and pickpockets.

Southey walked with us that morning for about five miles on our road towards Grasmere, which brought us to the southern side of Shoulthwaite Moss, and into the sweet solitary little vale of Legberthwaite. And, by the way, he took leave of us at the gate of a house, one amongst the very few (five or six in all) just serving to redeem that valley from absolute solitude, which some years afterwards became, in a slight degree, remarkable to me from two little incidents by which it connected itself with my personal experiences. One was, perhaps, scarcely worth recording. It was simply this—that Wordsworth and myself having, through a long day’s rambling, alternately walked and rode with a friend of his who happened to have a travelling carriage with him, and who was on his way to Keswick, agreed to wait hereabouts until Wordsworth’s friend, in his abundant kindness, should send back his carriage to take us, on our return to Grasmere, distant about eight miles. It was a lovely summer evening; but, as it happened that we ate our breakfast early, and had eaten nothing at all throughout a long summer’s day, we agreed to ‘sorn’ upon the goodman of the house, whoever he might happen to be, Catholic or Protestant, Jew, Gentile, or Mahometan, and to take any bone that he would be pleased to toss to such hungry dogs as ourselves. Accordingly we repaired to his gate; we knocked, and forthwith it was opened to us by a man-mountain, who listened benignantly to our humble request, and ushered us into a comfortable parlour. All sorts of refreshments he continued to shower upon us for a space of two hours: it became evident that our introducer was the master of the house: we adored him in our thoughts as an earthly providence to hungry wayfarers; and we longed to make his acquaintance. But, for some inexplicable reason, that must continue to puzzle all future commentators on Wordsworth and his history, he never made his appearance. Could it be, we

thought, that without the formality of a sign, he, in so solitary a region, more than twenty-five miles distant from Kendal, (the only town worthy of the name throughout the adjacent country,) exercised the functions of a landlord, and that we ought to pay him for his most liberal hospitality? Never was such a dilemma from the foundation of Legberthwaite. To err, in either direction, was damnable: to go off without paying, if he *were* an innkeeper, made us swindlers; to offer payment, if he were not, and supposing that he had been inundating us with his hospitable bounties, simply in the character of a natural-born gentleman, made us the most unfeeling of mercenary ruffians. In the latter case we might expect a duel; in the former, of course, the treadmill. We were deliberating on this sad alternative, and I, for my part, was voting in favour of the treadmill, when the sound of wheels was heard, and, in one minute, the carriage of his friend drew up to the farmer's gate; the crisis had now arrived, and we perspired considerably; when in came the frank Cumberland lass who had been our attendant. To her we propounded our difficulty—and lucky it was we did so, for she assured us that her master was an awful man, and would have 'brained' us both if we had insulted him with the offer of money. She, however, honoured us by accepting the price of some female ornament. I made a memorandum at the time, to ascertain the peculiar taste of this worthy Cumberland farmer, in order that I might, at some future opportunity, express my thanks to him for his courtesy; but, alas! for human resolutions, I have not done so to this moment; and is it likely that he, perhaps sixty years old at that time, (1813,) is alive at present, twenty-five years removed? Well, he *may* be; though I think *that* exceedingly doubtful, considering the next anecdote relating to the same house:—Two, or it may be three, years after this time, I was walking to Keswick from my own cottage, in Grasmere. The distance was thirteen miles; the time just nine o'clock; the night a cloudy moonlight, and intensely cold. I took the very greatest delight in these nocturnal walks, through the silent valleys of Cumberland and Westmoreland; and often at hours far later than the present. What I liked in this solitary rambling was, to trace the course of the evening through its household hieroglyphics, from the windows which I passed or saw; to see the blazing fires shining through the windows of houses, lurking in nooks far apart from neighbours; sometimes in

solitudes that seemed abandoned to the owl, to catch the sounds of household mirth; then, some miles further, to perceive the time of going to bed; then the gradual sinking to silence of the house; then the drowsy reign of the cricket; at intervals, to hear church-clocks or a little solitary chapel-bell, under the brows of mighty hills, proclaiming the hours of the night, and flinging out their sullen knells over the graves where 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet slept'—where the strength and the loveliness of Elizabeth's time, or Cromwell's, and through so many fleeting generations that have succeeded, had long ago sunk to rest. Such was the sort of pleasure which I reaped in my nightly walks—of which, however, considering the suspicions of lunacy which it has sometimes awoke, the less I say, perhaps, the better. Nine o'clock it was—and deadly cold as ever March night was made by the keenest of black frosts and by the bitterest of north winds—when I drew towards the gate of our huge and hospitable friend. A little garden there was before the house; and, in the centre of this garden was placed an arm-chair, upon which arm-chair was sitting composedly—but I rubbed my eyes, doubting the very evidence of my own eyesight *a* or *the* huge man in his shirt-sleeves; yes, positively not sunning but *moon*ing himself—apricating himself in the occasional moonbeams; and, as if simple star-gazing from a sedentary station were not sufficient on such a night, absolutely pursuing his astrological studies, I repeat, in his shirt-sleeves! Could this be our hospitable friend, the man-mountain? Secondly, was it any man at all? Might it not be a scarecrow dressed up to frighten the birds? But from what—to frighten them from what at that season of the year? Yet, again, it might be an ancient scarecrow—a superannuated scarecrow, far advanced in years. But still, why should a scarecrow, young or old, sit in an arm-chair? Suppose I were to ask. Yet, where was the use of asking a scarecrow? And, if not a scarecrow, where was the safety of speaking too inquisitively, on his own premises, to a man-mountain? The old dilemma of the duel or the treadmill, if I should intrude upon his grounds at night, occurred to me; and I watched the anomalous object in silence for some minutes. At length the monster (for such at any rate it was, scarecrow or not scarecrow) solemnly raised his hand to his face, perhaps taking a pinch of snuff, and thereby settled one question. But that settled, only irritated my curiosity the more; upon a second,

what hallucination of the brain was it that could induce a living man to adopt so very absurd a line of conduct? Once I thought of addressing him thus:—Might I presume so far upon your known courtesy to wayfaring strangers, as to ask—Is it the Devil who prompts you to sit in your shirt-sleeves, as if meditating a *camisade*, or to woo *al fresco* pleasures on such a night as this? But as Dr. Y., on complaining that, whenever he looked out of the window, he was sure to see Mr. X. lounging about the quadrangle, was effectually parried by Mr. X. retorting—that, whenever he lounged in the quadrangle, he was sure to see the Doctor looking out of the window; so did I anticipate a puzzling rejoinder from the former, with regard to my own motives for haunting the roads as a nocturnal trumper, without a rational object that I could make intelligible. I thought, also, of the fate which attended the Calendars, and so many other notorious characters in the ‘Arabian Nights,’ for unseasonable questions, or curiosity too vivacious. And, upon the whole, I judged it advisable to pursue my journey in silence, considering the time of night, the solitary place, and the fancy of our enormous friend for ‘braining’ those whom he regarded as ugly customers. And thus it came about that this one house has been loaded in my memory with a double mystery, that too probably never *can* be explained; and another torment has been prepared for the curious of future ages.¹

Of Southey, meantime, I had learned, upon this brief and hurried visit, so much in confirmation or in extension of my tolerably just preconceptions, with regard to his character and manners, as left me not a very great deal to add, and nothing at all to alter, through the many years which followed of occasional intercourse with his family, and domestic knowledge of his habits. A man of more serene and even temper could not be imagined; nor more uniformly cheerful in his tone of spirits; nor more unaffectedly polite and courteous in his demeanour to strangers; nor more hospitable in his own wrong—I mean by the painful sacrifices, which hospitality entailed upon him, of time, so exceedingly precious that, during his winter and spring months of solitude, or wherever he was left absolute master of its distribution, every half hour in the day had its peculiar duty. In the still ‘weightier matters of the law,’ in cases that involved appeals to

¹ ‘Aux Saumaises futurs préparer les tortures.’—Boileau [Q., from *Selections Grave and Gay*.]

conscience and high moral principle, I believe Southey to be as exemplary a man as can ever have lived. Were it to his own instant ruin, I am satisfied that he would do justice and fulfil his duty under any possible difficulties, and through the very strongest temptations to do otherwise. For honour the most delicate, for integrity the firmest, and for generosity within the limits of prudence, Southey cannot well have a superior; and, in the lesser moralities—those which govern the daily habits, and transpire through the manners—he is certainly a better man—that is, (with reference to the minor principle concerned,) a more *amiable* man—than Wordsworth. He is less capable, for instance, of usurping an undue share of the conversation; he is more uniformly disposed to be charitable in his transient colloquial judgments upon doubtful actions of his neighbours; more gentle and winning in his condescensions to inferior knowledge or powers of mind; more willing to suppose it possible that he himself may have fallen into an error; more tolerant of avowed indifference towards his own writings, (though, by the way, I shall have something to offer in justification of Wordsworth upon this charge;) and, finally, if the reader will pardon a violent instance of anti-climax, much more ready to volunteer his assistance in carrying a lady's reticule or parasol. As a more *amiable* man, (taking that word partly in the French sense, partly also in the loftier English sense,) it might be imagined that Southey would be a more eligible companion than Wordsworth. But this is not so; and chiefly for three reasons which more than counterbalance Southey's greater amiability: *first*, because the natural reserve of Southey, which I have mentioned before, makes it peculiarly difficult to place yourself on terms of intimacy with him; *secondly*, because the range of his conversation is more limited than that of Wordsworth—dealing less with life and the interests of life—more exclusively with books; *thirdly*, because the style of his conversation is less flowing and diffusive—less expansive—more apt to clothe itself in a keen, sparkling, aphoristic form—consequently much sooner and more frequently coming to an abrupt close. A sententious, epigrammatic form of delivering opinions has a certain effect of *clenching* a subject, which makes it difficult to pursue it without a corresponding smartness of expression, and something of the same antithetic point and equilibration of clauses. Not that the reader is to suppose in Southey a showy master of rhetoric and colloquial

sword-play, seeking to strike and to dazzle by his brilliant hits or adroit evasions. The very opposite is the truth. He seeks, indeed, to be effective, not for the sake of display, but as the readiest means of retreating from display, and the necessity for display: feeling that his station in literature and his laurelled honours make him a mark for the curiosity and interest of the company—that a standing appeal is constantly turning to him for his opinion—a latent call always going on for his voice on the question of the moment—he is anxious to comply with this requisition at as slight a cost as may be of thought and time. His heart is continually reverting to his wife, viz. his library; and that he may waste as little effort as possible upon his conversational exercises—that the little he wishes to say may appear pregnant with much meaning—he finds it advantageous, and, moreover, the style of his mind naturally prompts him, to adopt a trenchant, pungent, aculeated form of terse, glittering, stenographic sentences—sayings which have the air of laying down the law without any *locus penitentiæ* or privilege of appeal, but are not meant to do so: in short, aiming at brevity for the company as well as for himself, by cutting off all opening for discussion and desultory talk, through the sudden winding up that belongs to a sententious aphorism. The hearer feels that ‘the record is closed’; and he has a sense of this result as having been accomplished by something like an oracular laying down of the law *ex cathedra*: but this is an indirect collateral impression from Southey’s manner, and far from the one he meditates or wishes. An oracular manner he does certainly affect in certain dilemmas of a languishing or loitering conversation; not the peremptoriness, meantime, not the imperiousness of the oracle is what he seeks for, but its brevity, its dispatch, its conclusiveness. Finally, as a fourth reason why Southey is less fitted for a genial companion than Wordsworth, his spirits have been, of late years, in a lower key than those of the latter. The tone of Southey’s animal spirits was never at any time raised beyond the standard of an ordinary sympathy; there was in him no tumult, no agitation of passion; his organic and constitutional sensibilities were healthy, sound, perhaps strong—but not profound, not excessive. Cheerful he was, and animated at all times; but he levied no tributes on the spirits or the feelings beyond what all people could furnish. One reason why his bodily temperament never, like that of Wordsworth, threw him into

a state of tumultuous excitement, which required intense and elaborate conversation to work off the excessive fervour, was, that, over and above his far less fervid constitution of mind and body, Southey rarely took any exercise; he led a life as sedentary, except for the occasional excursions in summer, (extorted from his sense of kindness and hospitality,) as that of a city tailor. And it was surprising to many people, who did not know by experience the prodigious effect upon the mere bodily health of regular and congenial mental labour, that Southey should be able to maintain health so regular, and cheerfulness so uniformly serene. Cheerful, however, he was, in those early years of my acquaintance with him; but it was manifest to a thoughtful observer, that his golden equanimity was bound up in a threefold chain, in a conscience clear of all offence, in the recurring enjoyments from his honourable industry, and in the gratification of his parental affections. If any one chord should give way, there (it seemed) would be an end to Southey's tranquillity. He had a son at that time, Herbert¹ Southey, a child in petticoats when I first knew him, very interesting even then, but annually putting forth fresh blossoms of unusual promise, that made even indifferent people fear for the safety of one so finely organized, so delicate in his sensibilities, and so prematurely accomplished. As to his father, it became evident, that he lived almost in the light of young Herbert's smiles, and that the very pulses of his heart played in unison to the sound of his son's laughter. There was in his manner towards this child, and towards this only, something that marked an excess of delirious doating, perfectly unlike the ordinary chastened movements of Southey's affections; and something also, which indicated a vague fear about him; a premature unhappiness as if already the inaudible tread of calamity could be perceived, as if already he had lost him, which, for the latter years of the

¹ Why he was called Herbert, if my young readers inquire, I must reply, that I do not precisely know; because I know of reasons too many by half why he might have been so called. Derwent Coleridge, the second son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and first cousin of Herbert Southey, was so called from the Lake of Keswick, commonly styled Derwent Water, which gave the title of Earl to the noble and the noble-minded, though erring family of the Ratchliffes, who gave up, like heroes and martyrs, their lives and the finest estates in England for one who was incapable of appreciating the service. One of the islands on this lake is dedicated to St. Herbert, and this *might* have given a name to Southey's first-born child. But it is more probable, that he derived this name from Dr. Herbert, uncle to the laureate. [Q.]

boy's life, seemed to poison the blessing of his presence.¹ A stronger evidence I cannot give of Southey's trembling apprehensiveness about this child, than that the only rude thing I ever knew him to do, the only discourteous thing, was done on his account. A party of us, chiefly composed of Southey's family and his visitors, were in a sail-boat upon the lake. Herbert was one of this party; and at that time not above five or six years old. In landing upon one of the islands, most of the gentlemen were occupied in assisting the ladies over the thwarts of the boat; and one gentleman, merely a stranger, observing this, good-naturedly took up Herbert in his arms, and was stepping with him most carefully from thwart to thwart, when Southey, in a perfect frenzy of anxiety for his boy, his 'moon' as he used to call him, (I suppose from some pun of his own, or some mistake of the child's upon the equivocal word *sun*,) rushed forward, and tore him out of the arms of the stranger without one word of apology; nor, in fact, under the engrossing panic of the moment, lest an unsteady movement along with the rocking and undulating of the boat should throw his little boy overboard into the somewhat stormy waters of the lake, did Southey become aware of his own exceedingly discourteous action—fear for his boy quelled his very power of perception. *That* the stranger, on reflection, understood, a race of emotions travelled over his countenance. I saw the whole, a silent observer from the shore. First a hasty blush of resentment mingled with astonishment: then a good-natured smile of indulgence to the *naïveté* of the paternal feeling as displaying itself in the act, and the accompanying gestures of frenzied impatience; finally, a considerate, grave expression of acquiescence in the whole act; but with a pitying look towards father and son, as too probably destined under such agony of affection to trials perhaps insupportable. If I interpreted aright the stranger's feelings, he did not read their destinies amiss. Herbert became, with his growing years, a child of more and more hope; but, therefore, the object of more and more fearful solicitude. He read, and read; and he became at last

‘A very learned youth’—

¹ Without meaning it, or perceiving it at the time of writing, I have here expressed the fine sentiment (psychologically so true) of Shakspeare in one of his sonnets—

‘And weep to *have* what I so fear to *lose*.’ [Q., from *Selections Grave and Gay*.]

to borrow a line from his uncle's beautiful poem on the wild boy, who fell into a heresy, whilst living under the patronage of a Spanish grandee, and, finally, escaped from a probable martyrdom, by sailing up a great American river, wide as any sea, after which he was never heard of again. The learned youth of the river Greta had an earlier and more sorrowful close to his career. Possibly from want of exercise, combined with inordinate exercise of the cerebral organs, a disease gradually developed itself in the heart. It was not a mere disorder in the functions, it was a disease in the structure of the organ, and admitted of no permanent relief, consequently of no final hope. He died; and with him died for ever the golden hopes, the radiant felicity, and the internal serenity, of the unhappy father. It was from Southey himself, speaking without external signs of agitation, calmly, dispassionately, almost coldly, but with the coldness of a settled despondency, that I heard, whilst accompanying him through Grasmere on his road homewards to Keswick, from some visit he had been paying to Wordsworth at Rydalmount, his settled feelings and convictions as connected with that loss; for *him*, in this world, he said, happiness there could be none; for that his tenderest affections, the very deepest by many degrees which he had ever known, were now buried in the grave with his youthful and too brilliant Herbert.

SOUTHEY, WORDSWORTH, AND COLERIDGE *

From 1807 to 1830

BY THE ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER

A CIRCUMSTANCE which, as much as anything, expounded to the very eye the characteristic distinctions between Wordsworth and Southey, and would not suffer a stranger to forget it for a moment, was the insignificant place and consideration allowed to the small book-collection of the former, contrasted with the splendid library of the latter. The two or three hundred volumes of Wordsworth occupied a little, homely, painted book-case, fixed into one of two shallow recesses, formed on each side of the fireplace by the projection of the chimney in the little sitting-room upstairs, which he had already described as his half kitchen and half parlour. They were ill bound, or not bound at all—in boards, sometimes in tatters; many were imperfect as to the number of volumes, mutilated as to the number of pages; sometimes, where it seemed worth while, the defects being supplied by manuscript; sometimes not: in short, everything showed that the books were for use, and not for show; and their limited amount showed that their possessor must have independent sources of enjoyment to fill up the major part of his time. In reality, when the weather was tolerable, I believe that Wordsworth rarely resorted to his books, (unless, perhaps, to some little pocket edition of a poet, which accompanied him in his rambles,) except in the evenings, or after he had tired himself by walking. On the other hand, Southey's collection occupied a separate room, the largest, and, every way, the most agreeable in the house; and this room was styled, and not ostentatiously, (for it really merited that name,) the library.

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for August 1839.

The house itself, Greta Hall, stood upon a little eminence, (as I have before mentioned,) overhanging the river Greta. There was nothing remarkable in its internal arrangements: in all respects, it was a very plain unadorned family dwelling; large enough, by a little contrivance, to accommodate two or, in some sense, three families, viz. Mr. Southey, and *his* family; Mr. Coleridge, and *his*; together with Mrs. Lovell, who, when her son was with her, might be said to compose a third. Mrs. Coleridge, Mrs. Southey, and Mrs. Lovell were sisters; all having come originally from Bristol; and, as the different sets of children in this one house had each three several aunts, all the ladies, by turns, assuming that relation twice over, it was one of Southey's many amusing jests, to call the hill on which Greta Hall was placed, the *ant-hill*. Mrs. Lovell was the widow of Mr. Robert Lovell, who had published a volume of poems, in conjunction with Southey, somewhere about the year 1797, under the signatures of Bion and Moschus. This lady, having one only son, did not require any large suite of rooms; and the less so, as her son quitted her, at an early age, to pursue a professional education. The house had therefore been divided (not by absolute partition, into two distinct¹ apartments, but by an amicable distribution of rooms) between the two families of Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Southey; Mr. Coleridge had a separate study, which was distinguished by nothing except by an organ amongst its furniture, and by a magnificent view from its window, (or windows,) if that could be considered a distinction, in a situation whose local necessities presented you with magnificent objects in whatever direction you might happen to turn your eyes. In the morning, the two families might live apart; but they met at dinner, and in a common drawing-room; and Southey's library, in both senses of the word, was placed at the service of all the ladies alike. However, they did not intrude upon him, except in cases where they wished for a larger reception room, or a more interesting place for suggesting the topics of conversation. Interesting this room was, indeed, and in a degree not often rivalled, The library—the collection of books, I mean, which formed the

¹ 'Into two distinct apartments.'—The word apartment, meaning, in effect, a compartment of a house, already includes, in its proper sense, a suite of rooms; and it is a mere vulgar error, arising out of the ambitious usage of lodging-house keepers, to talk of one family or an establishment occupying apartments, in the plural. The Queen's apartment at St. James' or at Versailles—not the Queen's apartments—is the correct expression. [Q.]

most conspicuous part of its furniture within—was in all senses a good one. The books were chiefly English, Spanish, and Portuguese; well selected, being the great cardinal classics of the three literatures; fine copies, and decorated externally with a reasonable elegance, so as to make them in harmony with the other embellishments of the room. This effect was aided by the horizontal arrangement upon brackets, of many rare manuscripts—Spanish or Portuguese. Made thus gay within, this room stood in little need of attractions from without. Yet, even upon the gloomiest day of winter, the landscape from the different windows was too permanently commanding in its grandeur, too essentially independent of the seasons or the pomp of woods, to fail in fascinating the gaze of the coldest and dullest of spectators. The lake of Derwent Water in one direction, with its lovely islands—a lake about ten miles in circuit, and shaped pretty much like a boy's kite; the lake of Bassinethwaite in another; the mountains of Newlands arranging themselves like pavilions; the gorgeous confusion of Borrowdale just revealing its sublime chaos through the narrow vista of its gorge; all these objects lay in different angles to the front; whilst the sullen rear, not fully visible on this side of the house, was closed for many a league by the vast and towering masses of Skiddaw and Blencathara—mountains which are rather to be considered as frontier barriers, and chains of hilly ground, cutting the county of Cumberland into great chambers and different climates, than as insulated eminences; so vast is the area which they occupy; though there *are* also such separate and insulated heights, and nearly amongst the highest in the country. Southey's lot had therefore fallen, locally considered, into a goodly heritage. This grand panorama of mountain scenery, so varied, so expansive, and yet having the delightful feeling about it of a deep seclusion and dell-like sequestration from the world—a feeling which, in the midst of so expansive an area, spread out below his windows, could not have been sustained by any barriers less elevated than Glaramara, Skiddaw, or (which could be also descried) 'the mighty Helvellyn and Catchedicam;' this congregation of hill and lake, so wide, and yet so prison-like, in its separation from all beyond it, lay for ever under the eyes of Southey. His position locally and, in some respects, intellectually reminded one of Gibbon: but with great advantage in the comparison to Southey. The little town of Keswick and its adjacent lake bore

something of the same relation to mighty London that Geneva and its lake may be thought to bear towards brilliant Paris. Southey, like Gibbon, was a miscellaneous scholar; he, like Gibbon, of vast historical research; he, like Gibbon, signally industrious, and patient, and elaborate in collecting the materials for his historical works. Like Gibbon, he had dedicated a life of competent ease, in a pecuniary sense, to literature; like Gibbon, he had gathered to the shores of a beautiful lake, remote from great capitals, a large, or, at least, sufficient library; (in each case, I believe, the library ranged, as to numerical amount, between seven and ten thousand;) and, like Gibbon, he was the most accomplished litterateur amongst the erudite scholars of his time, and the most of an erudite scholar amongst the accomplished litterateurs. After all these points of agreement known, it remains as a pure advantage on the side of Southey—a mere *lucro ponatur*—that he was a poet; and, by all men's confession, a respectable poet, brilliant in his descriptive powers, and fascinating in his narration, however much he might want of

‘The vision and the faculty divine.’

It is remarkable amongst the series of parallelisms that have been or might be pursued between two men, both had the honour of retreating from a parliamentary life¹; Gibbon, after some silent and inert experience of that warfare; Southey, with a prudent foresight of the ruin to his health and literary usefulness, won from the experience of his nearest friends.

I took leave of Southey in 1807, at the descent into the vale of Legberthwaite, as I have already noticed. One year afterwards, I became a permanent resident in his neighbourhood; and, although, on various accounts, my intercourse with him was at no time very strict, partly from the very uncongenial constitution of my own mind, and the different direction of my studies, partly

¹ It illustrated the national sense of Southey's comprehensive talents, and of his political integrity, that Lord Radnor (the same who, under the courtesy title of Lord Folkestone, had distinguished himself for very democratic politics in the House of Commons, and had even courted the technical designation of *radical*) was the man who offered to bring in Southey for a borough dependent on *his* influence. Sir Robert Peel, under the same sense of Southey's merits had offered him a baronetcy. Both honours were declined, on the same prudential considerations, and with the same perfect disregard of all temptations from personal vanity. [Q.]

from my reluctance to levy any tax on time so precious and so fully employed, I was yet on such terms for the next ten or eleven years, that I might, in a qualified sense, call myself his friend.

Yes! there were long years through which Southey might respect me, I *him*. But the years came—for I have lived too long, reader, in relation to many things! and the report of me would have been better, or more uniform at least, had I died some twenty years ago—the years came in which circumstances made me an Opium-Eater; years through which a shadow as of sad eclipse sate and rested upon my faculties; years through which I was careless of all but those who lived within *my* inner circle, within ‘my heart of hearts’; years—ah! heavenly years!—through which I lived, beloved, *with* thee, *to* thee, *for* thee, *by* thee! Ah! happy, happy years! in which I was a mere football of reproach, but in which every wind and sounding hurricane of wrath or contempt flew by like chasing enemies past some defying gates of adamant, and left me too blessed in thy smiles—angel of life!—to heed the curses or the mocking which sometimes I heard raving outside of our impregnable Eden. What any man said of me in those days, what he thought, did I ask? did I care? Then it was, or nearly then, that I ceased to see, ceased to hear of Southey; as much abstracted from all which concerned the world outside, and from the Southseys, or even the Coleridges, in its van, as though I had lived with the darlings of my heart in the centre of Canadian forests, and all men else in the centre of Hindostan.

But, before I part from Greta Hall and its distinguished master, one word let me say, to protect myself from the imputation of sharing in some peculiar opinions of Southey with respect to political economy, which have been but too familiar to the world; and some opinions of the world, hardly less familiar, with respect to Southey himself and his accomplishments.* Probably, with respect to the first, before this paper will be made public, I shall have sufficiently vindicated my own opinions in these matters by a distinct treatment of some great questions which lie at the base of all sound political economy; above all, the radical question of value, upon which no man has ever seen the full truth except

* De Quincey was especially proud of his own writings on political economy, chief among which was *The Logic of Political Economy* (1844).

Mr. Ricardo; and, unfortunately, he had but little of the *polemic*¹ skill which is required to meet the errors of his opponents. For it is noticeable, that the most conspicuous of those opponents, viz. Mr. Malthus, though too much, I fear, actuated by a spirit of jealousy, and, therefore, likely enough to have scattered sophistry and disingenuous quibbling over the subject, had no need whatever of any further confusion for darkening and perplexing his themes than what inevitably belonged to his own most chaotic understanding. He and Say, the Frenchman, were both plagued by understandings of the same quality—having a clear vision in shallow waters, and this misleading them into the belief that they saw with equal clearness through the remote and the obscure; whereas, universally, their acuteness is like that of Hobbes—the gift of shallowness, and the result of *not* being subtle or profound enough to apprehend the true *locus* of the difficulty; and the barriers, which to them limit the view, and give to it, together with the contraction, all the distinctness and definite outline of limitation, are, in nine cases out of ten, the product of their own defective and aberrating vision, and not real barriers at all. Meantime, until I write fully and deliberately upon this subject, I shall observe simply, that all ‘the Lake Poets,’ as they are called, were not only in error, but most presumptuously in error, upon these subjects. They were ignorant of every principle belonging to every question alike in political economy, and they were obstinately bent upon learning nothing; they were all alike too proud to acknowledge that any man knew better than they, unless it were upon some purely professional subject, or some art remote from all intellectual bearings, such as conferred no honour in its possession. Wordsworth was the least tainted with error upon political economy; and that because he rarely applied his thoughts to any question of that nature, and, in fact, despised every study of a moral or political aspect unless it drew its materials from

¹ ‘*Polemic* skill.’—The word *polemic* is falsely interpreted by the majority of mere English readers. Having seldom seen it used except in a case of theological controversy, they fancy that it has some original and etymological appropriation to such a use: whereas it expresses, with regard to *all* subjects, without restriction, the functions of the debater as opposed to those of the original orator; the functions of him who meets error and unravels confusion or misrepresentation, opposed to those of him who lays down the abstract truth, truth absolute and without relation to the modes of viewing it. As well might the word *Radical* be limited to a political use as *Polemic* to controversial divinity. [Q.]

such revelations of truth as could be won from the *prima philosophia* of human nature approached with the poet's eye. Coleridge was the one whom Nature and his own multifarious studies had the best qualified for thinking justly on a theme such as this; but he also was shut out from the possibility of knowledge by presumption, and the habit of despising all the analytic studies of his own day—a habit for which he certainly had some warrant in the peculiar feebleness of all that has offered itself for *philosophy* in modern England. In particular, the religious discussions of the age, which touch inevitably at every point upon the profounder philosophy of man and his constitution, had laid bare the weakness of his own age to Coleridge's eye; and, because all was hollow and trivial in this direction, he chose to think that it was so in every other. And hence he has laid himself open to the just scoffs of persons far inferior to himself. In a foot-note in some late number of 'The Westminster Review,' it is most truly asserted, (not in these words, but to this effect,) that Coleridge's 'Table Talk' exhibits a superannuation of error fit only for two centuries before. And what gave peculiar point to this display of ignorance was, that Coleridge did not, like Wordsworth, dismiss political economy from his notice, disdainfully, as a puerile tissue of truisms, or of falsehoods not less obvious, but actually addressed himself to the subject; fancied he had made discoveries in the science; and even promised us a systematic work on its whole compass.

To give a sample of this new and reformed political economy, it cannot well be necessary to trouble the reader with more than one chimera culled from those which Mr. Coleridge first brought forward in his early model of 'The Friend.' He there propounds, as an original hypothesis of his own, that taxation never burthens a people, or, as a mere possibility, *can* burthen a people, simply by its amount. And why? Surely it draws from the purse of him who pays the quota a sum which it may be very difficult or even ruinous for him to pay, were it no more important in a public point of view than as so much deducted from his own unproductive expenditure, and which may happen to have even a national importance if it should chance to be deducted from the funds destined to productive industry. What is Mr. Coleridge's answer to these little objections? Why, thus: the latter case he evades entirely, apparently not adverting to it as a case in any

respect distinguished from the other; and this other—how is *that* answered? Doubtless, says Mr. Coleridge, it may be inconvenient to John or Samuel that a sum of money, otherwise disposable for their own separate uses, should be abstracted for the purchase of bayonets or grape-shot; but with this the public, the commonwealth, have nothing to do, any more than with the losses at a gaming-table, where A's loss is B's gain—the total funds of the nation remaining exactly the same. It is, in fact, nothing but the accidental distribution of the funds which is affected—possibly for the worse, (no other 'worse,' however, is contemplated than shifting it into hands less deserving,) but, also, by possibility, for the better: and the better and the worse may be well supposed, in the long run, to balance each other. And that this is Mr. Coleridge's meaning cannot be doubted, upon looking into his illustrative image in support of it: he says that money raised by Government in the shape of taxes is like moisture exhaled from the earth—doubtless, for the moment, injurious to the crops, but re-acting abundantly for their final benefit when returning in the shape of showers. So natural, so obvious, so inevitable, by the way, is this conceit, (or, to speak less harshly, this hypothesis,) and so equally natural, obvious, and inevitable is the illustration from the abstraction and restoration of moisture, the exhalations and rains which affect this earth of ours, like the systole and the diastole of the heart, the flux and reflux of the ocean, that precisely the same doctrine, and precisely the same exemplification of the doctrine, is to be found in a Parliamentary speech,¹ of some orator in the famous Long Parliament, about the year 1642. And to my mind it was a bitter humiliation, to find, about 150 years afterwards, in a shallow French work, the famous '*Compte Rendu*' of the French Chancellor of the Exchequer (Comptroller of the Finances)—Neckar—in that work, most humiliating it was to me, on a certain day, that I found this idle Coleridgian fantasy, not merely repeated, as it had been by scores—not merely anticipated by full twenty and two years, so that these French people had been beforehand with him, and had made Coleridge, to all appearance, their plagiarist, but also (hear it, ye gods!) answered, satisfactorily refuted, by this very feeble old sentimentalist,

¹ Reported at length in a small quarto volume, of the well-known quarto size so much in use for Tracts, Pamphlets, etc., throughout the life of Milton—1608-74. [Q.]

Neckar. Yes; positively Neckar, the slipshod old system-fancier and political driveller, had been so much above falling into the shallow snare, that he had, on sound principles, exposed its specious delusions. Coleridge, the subtlest of men, in his proper walk, had brought forward, as a novel hypothesis of his own, in 1810, what Neckar, the rickety old Charlatan, had scarcely condescended, in a hurried foot-note, to expose as a vulgar error and the shallowest of sophisms, in 1787-88.* There was another enormous blunder which Coleridge was constantly authorizing, both in his writings and his conversation. Quoting a passage from Sir James Stuart, in which he speaks of a vine-dresser as adding nothing to the public wealth, unless his labour did something more than replace his own consumption—that is, unless it reproduced it together with a profit; he asks contemptuously, whether the happiness and moral dignity that may have been exhibited in the vine-dresser's family are to pass for nothing? And then he proceeds to abuse the economists, because they take no account of such important considerations. Doubtless these are invaluable elements of social grandeur, in a *total* estimate of those elements. But what has political economy to do with them, a science openly professing to insulate and to treat apart from all other constituents of national well-being, those which concern the production and circulation of wealth?¹ So far from gaining anything by enlarging its field in the way demanded by Coleridge's critic, political economy would be as idly travelling out of the limits

¹In fact, the exposure is as perfect in the case of an individual as in that of a nation, and more easily apprehended. Levy from an individual clothier £1000 in taxes, and afterwards return to him the whole of this sum in payment for the clothing of a regiment. Then, supposing profits to be at the rate of 15 per cent., he will have replaced £150 of his previous loss, even his gains will simply reinstate him in something that he had lost, and the remaining £850 will continue to be a dead loss; since the £850 restored to him, exactly replaces, by the terms of this case, his disbursements in wages and materials; if it did more, profits would not be at 15 per cent., according to the supposition. But Government may spend *more* than the £1000 with this clothier; they may spend £10,000. Doubtless, and in that case, on the same supposition as to profits, he will receive £1500 as a nominal gain; and £500 will be a real gain, marked with the positive sign (+). But such a case would only prove, that nine other taxpayers, to an equal amount, had been left without any reimbursement at all. Strange, that so clear a case for an individual, should become obscure when it regards a nation. [Q.]

* Jacques Neckar's *Compte rendu au roi* appeared in 1781, *Nouveaux éclaircissements sur le Compte rendu au roi* in 1788.

indicated and held forth in its very name, as if logic were to teach ethics, or ethics to teach diplomacy. With respect to the Malthusian doctrine of population, it is difficult to know who was the true proprietor of the arguments urged against it sometimes by Southey sometimes by Coleridge. Those used by Southey are chiefly to be found up and down 'The Quarterly Review.' But a more elaborate attack was published by Hazlitt; and this must be supposed to speak the peculiar objections of Coleridge, for he was in the habit of charging Hazlitt with having pillaged his conversation, and occasionally garbled it throughout the whole of this book. One single argument there was, undoubtedly just, and it was one which others stumbled upon no less than Coleridge, exposing the fallacy of the supposed different laws of increase for vegetable and animal life. But though this frail prop withdrawn took away from Mr. Malthus's theory all its scientific rigour, the main *practical* conclusions were still valid as respected any argument from the lakery; for the strongest of these arguments that ever came to my knowledge was a mere appeal—not *ad verecundiam*, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, but *ad honestatem*, as if it were shocking to the *honestum* of Roman ethics (the *honnêteté* of French minor ethics,) that the check derived from self-restraint should not be supposed amply competent to redress all the dangers from a redundant population, under any certain knowledge generally diffused that such dangers existed. But these are topics which it is sufficient in this place to have noticed, *currente calamo*. I was anxious however to protest against the probable imputation, that I, because generally so intense an admirer of these men, adopted their blind and hasty reveries in political economy.

There were (and perhaps more justly I might say there *are*) two other notions currently received about Southey, one of which is altogether erroneous, and the other true only in a limited sense. The first is, the belief that he belonged to what is known as the lake school in poetry; with respect to which all that I need say in this place, is involved in his own declaration frankly made to myself in Easedale, during the summer of 1812; that he considered Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction, and still more his principles as to the selection of subjects, and as to what constituted a poetic treatment, as founded on error. There is certainly some community of phraseology between Southey and the other lakery, naturally

arising out of their joint reverence for Scriptural language: this was a field in which they met in common: else it shews but little discernment and power of valuing the essences of things, to have classed Southey in the same school with Wordsworth and Coleridge. The other popular notion about Southey, which I conceive to be expressed with much too little limitation, regards his style. He has been praised, and justly, for his plain, manly, unaffected English, until the parrot echoers of other men's judgments, who adopt all they relish with undistinguishing blindness, have begun to hold him up as a great master of his own language, and a classical model of fine composition. Now, if the error were only in the degree, it would not be worth while to notice it; but the truth is, that Southey's defects in this particular power, are as striking as his characteristic graces. Let a subject arise—and almost in any path, there is a ready possibility that it should—in which a higher tone is required, of splendid declamation, or of impassionate fervour, and Southey's style will immediately betray its want of the loftier qualities as flagrantly as it now asserts its powers in that unpretending form which is best suited to his level character of writing and his humbler choice of themes. It is to mistake the character of Southey's mind, which is elevated but not sustained by the higher modes of enthusiasm, to think otherwise. Were a magnificent dedication required, moving with a stately and measured solemnity, and putting forward some majestic pretensions, arising out of a long and laborious life; were a pleading required against some capital abuse of the earth—war, slavery, oppression in its thousand forms; were a *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* required; Southey's is not the mind, and, by a necessary consequence, Southey's is not the style, for carrying such purposes into full and memorable effect. His style is *therefore* good, because it has been suited to his themes; and those themes have hitherto been either narrative, which usually imposes a modest diction, and a modest structure of sentences, or argumentative in that class which is too overburdened with details, with replies, with interruption, and every mode of discontinuity, to allow a thought of eloquence, or of the periodic style which a perfect eloquence instinctively seeks.

I here close my separate notice of the Lake Poets—meaning those three who were originally so denominated—three men upon whom posterity, in every age, will look back with interest as

profound as, perhaps, belongs to any other names of our era; for it happens, not unfrequently, that the *personal* interest in the author is not in the direct ratio of that which belongs to his works: and the character of an author, better qualified to command a vast popularity for the creations of his pen, is oftentimes more of a universal character, less peculiar, less fitted to stimulate the curiosity, or to sustain the sympathy of the intellectual, than the profounder and more ascetic solemnity of a Wordsworth, or the prodigal and magnificent eccentricities of a Coleridge. With respect to both of these gifted men, some interesting notices still remain in arrear; but these will more properly come forward in their natural places, as they happen to arise in after years in connection with my own memoirs.

These I shall resume, from the moment of my leaving Wordsworth's cottage, after one week of delightful intercourse with him and his sister, about the 12th of November, 1807.

EARLY MEMORIALS OF GRASMERE *

† SOON after my return to Oxford in 1807–8, I received a letter from Miss Wordsworth, asking for any subscriptions I might succeed in obtaining amongst my college friends, in aid of the funds then raising on behalf of an orphan family, who had become such by an affecting tragedy that had occurred within a few weeks from my visit to Grasmere.‡

Miss Wordsworth's simple but fervid memoir§ not being within my reach at this moment, I must trust to my own recollections and my own impressions to retrace the story; which, after all, is not much of a story to excite or to impress, unless for those who can find a sufficient interest in the trials and calamities of hard-working peasants, and can reverence the fortitude which, being lodged in so frail a tenement as the person of a little girl, not much, if anything, above nine years old, could face an occasion of sudden mysterious abandonment, and could tower up, during one

* A longer version of this essay appeared in *Tait's*, September 1839, as 'Recollections of Grasmere'.

† *Tait's* begins: 'I now resume my memoirs, from the moment of my leaving Wordsworth's cottage, after one week of delightful intercourse with him and his sister, about the 12th of November, 1807.'

‡ *Tait's* inserts: 'This calamitous incident, interesting for itself as well as for having drawn forth some beautiful stanzas from Wordsworth, had a separate and peculiar importance in reference to my own life—having been the remote occasion of another misfortune that brought to myself the first deep draught from the cup of sorrow which it was destined that I should drink. Miss Wordsworth drew up a brief memoir of the whole affair. This, I believe, went into the hands of the royal family; at any rate, the august ladies of that house (all or some of them) were amongst the many subscribers to the orphan children; and it must be satisfactory to all who shared, and happen to recollect their own share in that seasonable work of charity, that the money then collected under the auspices of the Wordsworths, proved sufficient, with judicious administration and superintendence from a committee of the neighbouring ladies in Ambleside, to educate and settle respectably, in useful callings, the whole of a very large family, not one of whom, to my knowledge, has fared otherwise than prosperously, or, to speak of the very lowest case, decently in their subsequent lives, as men and women, long since surrounded by children of their own.'

§ Dorothy's account has been published: *George and Sarah Green, a Narrative*, E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1936).

night, into the perfect energies of womanhood, under the mere pressure of difficulty, and under the sense of newborn responsibilities awfully bequeathed to her, and in the most lonely, perhaps, of English habitations.

The little valley of Easedale, which, and the neighbourhood of which, were the scenes of these interesting events, is, on its own account, one of the most impressive solitudes amongst the mountains of the Lake district; and I must pause to describe it. Easedale is impressive *as* a solitude; for the depth of the seclusion is brought out and forced more pointedly upon the feelings by the thin scattering of houses over its sides, and over the surface of what may be called its floor. These are not above six at the most; and one, the remotest of the whole, was untenanted for all the thirty years of my acquaintance with the place. *Secondly*, it is impressive from the excessive loveliness which adorns its little area. This is broken up into small fields and miniature meadows, separated, not—as too often happens, with sad injury to the beauty of the Lake country—by stone walls, but sometimes by little hedgerows, sometimes by little sparkling, pebbly ‘becks,’ lustrous to the very bottom, and not too broad for a child’s flying leap; and sometimes by wild self-sown woodlands of birch, alder, holly, mountain ash, and hazel, that meander through the valley, intervening the different estates with natural sylvan marches, and giving cheerfulness in winter by the bright scarlet of their berries. It is the character of all the northern English valleys, as I have already remarked—and it is a character first noticed by Wordsworth—that they assume, in their bottom areas, the level, floor-like shape, making everywhere a direct angle with the surrounding hills, and definitely marking out the margin of their outlines: whereas the Welsh valleys have too often the glaring imperfection of the basin shape, which allows no sense of any flat area or valley surface: the hills are already commencing at the very centre of what is called the level area. The little valley of Easedale is, in this respect, as highly finished as in every other; and in the Westmoreland spring, which may be considered May and the earlier half of June, whilst the grass in the meadows is yet short from the habit of keeping the sheep on it until a much later period than elsewhere (*viz.*, until the mountains are so far cleared of snow and the probability of storms, as to make it safe to send them out on their summer migration), it follows naturally that the little fields in

Easedale have the most lawny appearance, and, from the humidity of the Westmoreland ¹ climate, the most verdant that it is possible to imagine.* But there is a third advantage possessed by this Easedale, above other rival valleys, in the sublimity of its mountain barriers. In one of its many rocky recesses is seen a 'force' (such is the local name for a cataract), white with foam, descending at all seasons with considerable strength, and, after the melting of snows, with an Alpine violence. Follow the leading of this 'force' for three quarters of a mile, and you come to a little mountain lake, locally termed a 'tarn,' ² the very finest and most gloomily sublime of its class. From this tarn it was, I doubt not, though applying it to another, that Wordsworth drew the circumstances of his general description.† And far beyond this 'enormous

¹ It is pretty generally known, perhaps, that Westmoreland and Devonshire are the two rainiest counties in England. At Kirkby Lonsdale, lying just on the outer margin of the Lake district, one-fifth more rain is computed to fall than in the adjacent counties on the same western side of England. But it is also notorious, that the western side of the island universally is more rainy than the east. Collins called it the showery west. [Q.]

* A tarn is a lake, generally (perhaps always) a small one: and always, as I think (but this I have heard disputed), lying above the level of the inhabited valleys and the large lakes; and subject to this farther restriction, first noticed by Wordsworth, that it has no main feeder. Now, this latter accident of the *thing* at once explains and authenticates my account of the *word*, viz., that it is the Danish word *taaren* (*a trickling of tears*), a deposit of waters from the weeping of rain down the smooth faces of the rocks. [Q.]

* *Tait's* continues: '... and on a gentle vernal day—when vegetation has been far enough advanced to bring out the leaves, an April sun gleaming coyly through the clouds, and genial April rain gently pencilling the light spray of the woods with tiny pearly drops—I have often thought, whilst looking with silent admiration upon this exquisite composition of landscape, with its miniature fields running up like forest glades into miniature woods; its little columns of smoke, breathing up like incense to the household gods, from the hearths of two or three picturesque cottages—abodes of simple primitive manners, and what, from personal knowledge, I will call humble virtue—whilst my eyes rested on this charming combination of lawns and shrubberies, I have thought that, if a scene of this earth could deserve to be sealed up, like the Valley of Rasselas, against the intrusion of the world—if there were one to which a man would willingly surrender himself as a prisoner for the years of a long life—that it is this Easedale which would justify the choice and recompense the sacrifice.'

† *Tait's* quotes a slightly garbled version of 'Fidelity', (lines 27–33),

'Thither the rainbow comes, the cloud
And mists that spread the flying shroud;
And winds
That, if they could, would hurry past:
But that enormous barrier binds it fast. &c. &c. &c.
The rocks repeat the raven's croak,
In symphony austere.'

barrier,' that thus imprisons the very winds, tower upwards the aspiring heads (usually enveloped in cloud and mist) of Glaramara, Bow Fell, and the other fells of Langdale Head and Borrowdale.* Easedale, in its relation to Grasmere, is a chamber within a chamber, or rather a closet within a chamber—a chapel within a cathedral—a little private oratory within a chapel.† The sole approach, as I have mentioned, is from Grasmere; and some *one* outlet there must inevitably be in every vale that can be interesting to a human occupant, since without water it would not be habitable; and running water must force an egress for itself, and, consequently, an ingress for the reader and myself: but, properly speaking, there is no other. For, when you explore the remoter end of the vale, at which you suspect some communication with the world outside, you find before you a most formidable amount

* *Tait's* reads: 'Finally, superadded to the other circumstances of solitude, arising out of the rarity of human life, and of the signs which mark the goings on of human life—two other accidents there are of Easedale, which sequester it from the world, and intensify its depth of solitude beyond what could be looked for or thought possible in any vale within a district so beaten by modern tourists. One is that it is a chamber . . .'

† *Tait's* goes on: 'For Easedale is, in fact, a dependency of Grasmere—a little recess lying within the same general basin of mountains, but partitioned off by a screen of rock and swelling uplands, so inconsiderable in height, that, when surveyed from the commanding summits of Fairfield or Seat Sandal, they seem to subside into the level area, and melt into the general surface. But, viewed from below, these petty heights form a sufficient partition; which is pierced, however, in two points—once by the little murmuring brook threading its silvery line onwards to the lake of Grasmere, and again by a little rough lane, barely capable (and I think not capable in all points) of receiving a post-chaise. This little lane keeps ascending amongst wooded steeps for a quarter of a mile; and then, by a downward course of a hundred yards or so, brings you to a point at which the little valley suddenly bursts upon you with as full a revelation of its tiny proportions, as the traversing of the wooded back-grounds will permit. The lane carries you at last to a little wooden bridge, practicable for pedestrians; but, for carriages, even the doubtful road, already mentioned, ceases altogether: and this fact, coupled with the difficulty of suspecting such a lurking paradise from the high road through Grasmere, at every point of which the little hilly partition crowds up into one mass with the capital barriers in the rear, seeming, in fact, not so much to blend with them as to be a part of them, may account for the fortunate neglect of Easedale in the tourist's route, and also because there is no one separate object, such as a lake or a splendid cataract, to bribe the interest of those who are hunting after sights; for the "force" is comparatively small, and the tarn is beyond the limits of the vale, as well as difficult of approach.

'One other circumstance there is about Easedale, which completes its demarkation and makes it entirely a landlocked little park, with a ring fence of mountains, as ever human art, if rendered capable of dealing with mountains and their arrangement, could have contrived.'

of climbing, the extent of which can hardly be measured where there is no solitary object of human workmanship or vestige of animal life, not a sheep-track, not a shepherd's hovel, but rock and heath, heath and rock, tossed about in monotonous confusion. And, after the ascent is mastered, you descend into a second vale—long, narrow, sterile—known by the name of 'Far Easedale:' from which point, if you could drive a tunnel *under* the everlasting hills, perhaps six or seven miles might bring you to the nearest habitation of man, in Borrowdale; but, going *over* the mountains, the road cannot be less than twelve or fourteen, and, in point of fatigue, at the least twenty. This long valley, which is really terrific at noonday, from its utter loneliness and desolation, completes the defences of little sylvan Easedale. There is one door into it from the Grasmere side: but that door is obscure; and on every other quarter there is no door at all; not any, the roughest, access, but such as would demand a day's walking.

Such is the solitude—so deep and so rich in miniature beauty—of Easedale; and in this solitude it was that George and Sarah Green, two poor and hard-working peasants, dwelt, with a numerous family of small children. Poor as they were, they had won the general respect of the neighbourhood, from the uncomplaining firmness with which they bore the hardships of their lot, and from the decent attire in which the good mother of the family contrived to send out her children to the Grasmere parish-school. It is a custom, and a very ancient one, in Westmoreland—the same custom (resting on the same causes) I have witnessed also in southern Scotland—that any sale by auction of household furniture (and seldom a month * passes without something of the sort) forms an excuse for the good women, throughout the whole circumference of perhaps four or five † valleys, to assemble at the place of sale, with the nominal purpose of buying something they may happen to want.‡ A sale, except it were of the sort exclusively interesting to farming *men*, is a kind of general intimation to the

* *Tait's* has 'a fortnight'.

† *Tait's* has 'a dozen'.

‡ *Tait's* inserts: 'No doubt, the real business of the sale attracts numbers; although of late years—that is, for the last twenty-five years, through which so many sales of furniture the most expensive, (hastily made by casual settlers, on the wing for some fresher novelty,)—have made this particular article almost a drug in the country; and the interest in such sales has greatly declined. But, in 1807, this fever of founding villas or *cottages ornées*, was yet only beginning; and a sale . . .'

country, from the owner of the property, that he will, on that afternoon, be 'at home' to all comers, and hopes to see as large an attendance as possible. Accordingly, it was the almost invariable custom—and often, too, when the parties were far too poor for such an effort of hospitality—to make ample provision, not of eatables, but of liquor, for all who came. Even a gentleman, who should happen to present himself on such a festal occasion, by way of seeing the 'humours' of the scene, was certain of meeting the most cordial welcome. The good woman of the house more particularly testified her sense of the honour done to her, and was sure to seek out some cherished and solitary article of china—a wreck from a century back—in order that he, being a porcelain man among so many delf men and women, might have a porcelain cup to drink from.

The main secret of attraction at these sales—many of which I have attended—was the social rendezvous thus effected between parties so remote from each other (either by real distance, or by virtual distance, resulting from the separation effected by mountains 3000 feet high), that, in fact, without some such common object, they would not be likely to hear of each other for months, or actually to meet for years. This principal charm of the 'gathering,' seasoned, doubtless, to many by the certain anticipation that the whole budget of rural gossip would then and there be opened, was not assuredly diminished to the men by the anticipation of excellent ale (usually brewed six or seven weeks before, in preparation for the event,) and possibly of still more excellent *pow-sowdy* (a combination of ale, spirits, and spices); nor to the women by some prospect, not so inevitably fulfilled, but pretty certain in a liberal house, of communicating their news over excellent tea. Even the auctioneer was always a character in the drama: he was always a rustic old humorist, and a jovial drunkard, privileged in certain good-humoured liberties and jokes with all bidders, gentle or simple, and furnished with an ancient inheritance of jests appropriate to the articles offered for sale—jestes that had, doubtless, done their office from Elizabeth's golden days; but no more, on that account, failing of their expected effect, with either man or woman of this nineteenth century, than the sun fails to gladden the heart, because it is that same old superannuated sun that has gladdened it for thousands of years.

One thing, however, in mere justice to the Dalesmen of

Westmoreland and Cumberland, I am bound in this place to record: Often as I have been at these sales, and years before even a scattering of gentry began to attend, yet so true to the natural standard of politeness was the decorum uniformly maintained, that even the old buffoon of an auctioneer never forgot himself so far as to found upon any article of furniture a jest fitted to call up a painful blush in any woman's face. He might, perhaps, go so far as to awaken a little rosy confusion upon some young bride's countenance, when pressing a cradle upon her attention; but never did I hear him utter, nor would he have been tolerated in uttering, a scurrilous or disgusting jest, such as might easily have been suggested by something offered at a household sale. Such jests as these I heard, for the first time, at a sale in Grasmere in 1814; and, I am ashamed to say it, from some 'gentlemen' of a great city. And it grieved me to see the effect, as it expressed itself upon the manly faces of the grave Dalesmen—a sense of insult offered to their women, who met in confiding reliance upon the forbearance of the men, and upon their regard for the dignity of the female sex, this feeling struggling with the habitual respect they are inclined to show towards what they suppose gentle blood and superior education. Taken generally, however, these were the most picturesque and festal meetings which the manners of the country produced. There you saw all ages and both sexes assembled; there you saw old men whose heads would have been studies for Guido; there you saw the most colossal and stately figures amongst the young men that England has to show; there the most beautiful young women. There it was that the social benevolence, the innocent mirth, and the neighbourly kindness of the people, most delightfully expanded, and expressed themselves with the least reserve.

To such a scene it was, to a sale of domestic furniture at the house of some proprietor in Langdale,* that George and Sarah Green set forward in the forenoon of a day fated to be their last on earth. The sale was to take place in Langdalehead; to which, from their own cottage in Easedale, it was possible in daylight, and supposing no mist upon the hills, to find out a short cut of not more than five or six † miles. By this route they went; and,

* For 'in Langdale' *Tait's* reads 'on the point of giving up housekeeping, perhaps in order to live with a married son or daughter'.

† For 'five or six' *Tait's* has 'eight'.

notwithstanding the snow lay on the ground, they reached their destination in safety. The attendance at the sale must have been diminished by the rigorous state of the weather; but still the scene was a gay one as usual. Sarah Green, though a good and worthy woman in her maturer years, had been imprudent, and—as the merciful judgment of the country is apt to express it—‘unfortunate’ in her youth. She had an elder daughter, who was illegitimate; and I believe the father of this girl was dead. The girl herself was grown up; and the peculiar solicitude of poor Sarah’s maternal heart was at this time called forth on *her* behalf: she wished to see her placed in a very respectable house, where the mistress was distinguished for her notable qualities, and for success in forming good servants. This object, as important to Sarah Green in the narrow range of her cares, as, in a more exalted family, it might be to obtain a ship for a lieutenant that had passed as master and commander, or to get him ‘posted’—occupied her almost throughout the sale. A doubtful answer had been given to her application; and Sarah was going about the crowd, and weaving her person in and out, in order to lay hold of this or that intercessor who might have, or might seem to have, some weight with the principal person concerned.

This I think is interesting to notice, as the last occupation which is known to have stirred the pulses of her heart. An illegitimate child is everywhere, even in the indulgent society of Westmoreland Dalesmen, under some cloud of discountenance;¹ so that Sarah Green might consider her duty to be the stronger towards this child of her ‘misfortune.’ And she probably had another reason for her anxiety—as some words dropped by her on this evening led people to presume—in her conscientious desire to introduce her daughter into a situation less perilous than that which had compassed her own youthful steps with snares. If so, it is painful to know that the virtuous wish, whose

‘Vital warmth
Gave the last human motion to her heart,’

¹ But still nothing at all in England by comparison with its gloomy excess in Scotland. In the present generation, the rancorous bigotry of this feeling has been considerably mitigated. But, if the reader wishes to view it in its ancient strength, I advise him to look into the ‘Life of Alexander Alexander’ (2 vols. 1830). He was a poor outcast, whose latter days were sheltered from ruin by the munificence of the late Mr. Blackwood, senior. [Q.]

should not have been fulfilled. She was a woman of ardent and affectionate spirit, of which Miss Wordsworth * gave me some circumstantial and affecting instances. This ardour it was, and her impassioned manner, that drew attention to what she did; for, otherwise, she was too poor a person to be important in the estimation of strangers, and, of all possible situations, to be important at a sale, where the public attention was naturally fixed upon the chief purchasers, and the attention of the purchasers fixed upon the chief competitors. Hence it happened that, after she ceased to challenge notice by the emphasis of her solicitations for her daughter, she ceased to be noticed at all; and nothing was recollected of her subsequent behaviour until the time arrived for general separation. This time was considerably after sunset; and the final recollections of the crowd with respect to George and Sarah Green were, that, upon their intention being understood to retrace their morning path, and to attempt the perilous task of dropping down into Easedale from the mountains above Langdalehead, a sound of remonstrance arose from many quarters. However, at such a moment, when everybody was in the hurry of departure, and to such persons (persons, I mean, so mature in years and in local knowledge), the opposition could not be very obstinate; party after party rode off; the meeting melted away, or, as the northern phrase is, *scaled*; ¹ and at length nobody was left of any weight that could pretend to influence the decision of elderly people. They quitted the scene, professing to obey some advice or other upon the choice of roads; but, at as early a point as they could do so unobserved, began to ascend the hills, everywhere open from the rude carriage-way. After this they were seen no more. They had disappeared into the cloud of death. Voices were heard, some hours afterwards, from the mountains—voices, as some thought, of alarm; others said, No, that it was only the voices of jovial people, carried by the wind into

¹ *Scaled*:—*Scale* is a verb both active and neuter. I use it here as a neuter verb, in the sense (a Cumberland sense) of separating to all the points of the compass. But by Shakspeare it is used in an active or transitive sense. Speaking of some secret news, he says, 'We'll scale it a little more'—i.e., spread it in all directions, and disentangle its complexities. [Q.]

* For 'Miss Wordsworth . . .' *Tait's* reads: 'Miss Wordsworth's memoir, or else her subsequent memorials in conversation, (I forget which,) gave some circumstantial and affecting instances, which I cannot now recall with accuracy.'

uncertain regions. The result was, that no attention was paid to the sounds.

That night, in little peaceful Easedale, six children sat by a peat-fire, expecting the return of their parents, upon whom they depended for their daily bread. Let a day pass, and they were starving. Every sound was heard with anxiety; for all this was reported many hundred times to Miss Wordsworth, and to those who, like myself, were never wearied of hearing the details. Every sound, every echo amongst the hills, was listened to for five hours, from seven to twelve. At length the eldest girl of the family—about nine years old—told her little brothers and sisters to go to bed. They had been trained to obedience; and all of them, at the voice of their eldest sister, went off fearfully to their beds. What could be *their* fears, it is difficult to say; they had no knowledge to instruct them in the dangers of the hills; but the eldest sister always averred that they had as deep a solicitude as she herself had about their parents. Doubtless she had communicated her fears to *them*. Some time in the course of the evening—but it was late, and after midnight—the moon arose, and shed a torrent of light upon the Langdale fells, which had already, long hours before, witnessed in darkness the death of their parents.*

That night, and the following morning, came a further and a heavier fall of snow; in consequence of which the poor children were completely imprisoned, and cut off from all possibility of communicating with their next neighbours. The brook was too much for them to leap; and the little, crazy wooden bridge could not be crossed, or even approached with safety, from the drifting of the snow having made it impossible to ascertain the exact situation of some treacherous hole in its timbers, which, if trod upon, would have let a small child drop through into the rapid waters. Their parents did not return. For some hours of the morning, the children clung to the hope that the extreme severity of the night had tempted them to sleep in Langdale; but this hope forsook them as the day wore away. Their father, George Green, had served as a soldier, and was an active man, of ready resources, who would not, under any circumstances, have failed to force a

* *Tair's* adds: 'It may be well here to cite Mr. Wordsworth's stanzas,' and quotes the poem now on pp. 222-3.

road back to his family, had he been still living; and this reflection, or rather semi-conscious feeling, which the awfulness of their situation forced upon the minds of all but the mere infants, awakened them to the whole extent of their calamity. Wonderful it is to see the effect of sudden misery, sudden grief, or sudden fear, in sharpening (where they do not utterly upset) the intellectual perceptions. Instances must have fallen in the way of most of us. And I have noticed frequently that even sudden and intense bodily pain forms part of the machinery employed by nature for quickening the development of the mind. The perceptions of infants are not, in fact, excited by graduated steps and continuously, but *per saltum*, and by unequal starts. At least, within the whole range of my own experience, I have remarked, that, after any very severe fit of those peculiar pains to which the delicate digestive organs of most infants are liable, there always became apparent on the following day a very considerable increase of vital energy and of quickened attention to the objects around them. The poor desolate children of Blentarn Ghyll,¹ hourly becoming more pathetically convinced that they were orphans, gave many evidences of this awaking power as lodged, by a providential arrangement, in situations of trial that most require it. They huddled together, in the evening, round their hearth-fire of peats, and held their little family councils upon what was to be done towards any chance—if chance remained—of yet giving aid to their parents; for a slender hope had sprung up that some hovel or sheep-fold might have furnished them a screen (or, in Westmoreland phrase, a *bield*) against the weather quarter of the storm, in which hovel they might even now be lying snowed up; and, secondly, as regarded themselves, in what way they were to make known their situation, in case the snow should continue or should increase; for starvation stared them in the face, if they should be confined for many days to their house.

Meantime, the eldest sister, little Agnes, though sadly alarmed,

¹ Wordsworth's conjecture as to the origin of the name is probably the true one. There is, at a little elevation above the place, a small concave tract of ground, shaped like the bed of a tarn. Some causes having diverted the supplies of water, at some remote period, from the little reservoir, the tarn has probably disappeared; but the bed, and other indications of a tarn (particularly a little ghyll, or steep rocky cleft for discharging the water), having remained as memorials that it once existed, the country people have called it the Blind Tarn—the tarn which wants its eye—in wanting the luminous sparkle of the waters of right belonging to it. [Q]

and feeling the sensation of *eeriness* as twilight came on, and she looked out from the cottage-door to the dreadful fells on which, too probably, her parents were lying corpses (and possibly not many hundred yards from their own threshold), yet exerted herself to take all the measures which their own prospects made prudent. And she told Miss Wordsworth, that, in the midst of the oppression on her little spirit, from vague ghostly terrors, she did not fail, however, to draw some comfort from the consideration, that the very same causes which produced their danger in one direction, sheltered them from danger of another kind—such dangers as she knew, from books that she had read, would have threatened a little desolate flock of children in other parts of England; for she considered thankfully, that, if *they* could not get out into Grasmere, on the other hand, bad men, and wild sea-faring foreigners, who sometimes passed along the high road even in that vale, could not get to *them*; and that, as to their neighbours, so far from having anything to fear in that quarter, their greatest apprehension was, lest they might not be able to acquaint them with their situation; but that, if this could be accomplished, the very sternest among them were kind-hearted people, that would contend with each other for the privilege of assisting them. Somewhat cheered with these thoughts, and having caused all her brothers and sisters—except the two little things, not yet of a fit age—to kneel down and say the prayers which they had been taught, this admirable little maiden turned herself to every household task that could have proved useful to them in a long captivity. First of all, upon some recollection that the clock was nearly going down, she wound it up. Next, she took all the milk which remained from what her mother had provided for the children's consumption during her absence, and for the breakfast of the following morning—this luckily was still in sufficient plenty for two days' consumption (skimmed or 'blue' milk being only one halfpenny a quart, and the quart a most redundant one, in Grasmere)—this she took and scalded, so as to save it from turning sour. That done, she next examined the meal chest; made the common oatmeal porridge of the country (the 'burgoo' of the Royal Navy); but put all of the children, except the two youngest, on short allowance; and, by way of reconciling them in some measure to this stinted meal, she found out a little hoard of flour, part of which she baked for them upon the hearth into little

cakes; and this unusual delicacy persuaded them to think that they had been celebrating a feast. Next, before night coming on should make it too trying to her own feelings, or before fresh snow coming on might make it impossible, she issued out of doors. There her first task was, with the assistance of two younger brothers, to carry in from the peat-stack as many peats as might serve them for a week's consumption. That done, in the second place she examined the potatoes, buried in 'brackens' (that is, withered fern): these were not many, and she thought it better to leave them where they were, excepting as many as would make a single meal, under a fear that the heat of their cottage would spoil them, if removed.

Having thus made all the provision in her power for supporting their own lives, she turned her attention to the cow. Her she milked; but, unfortunately, the milk she gave, either from being badly fed, or from some other cause, was too trifling to be of much consideration towards the wants of a large family. Here, however, her chief anxiety was to get down the hay for the cow's food from a loft above the outhouse: and in this she succeeded but imperfectly, from want of strength and size to cope with the difficulties of the case; besides, that the increasing darkness by this time, together with the gloom of the place, made it a matter of great self-conquest for her to work at all; but, as respected one night at any rate, she placed the cow in a situation of luxurious warmth and comfort. Then retreating into the warm house, and 'barring' the door, she sat down to undress the two youngest of the children; them she laid carefully and cosily in their little nests up-stairs, and sang them to sleep. The rest she kept up to bear her company until the clock should tell them it was midnight; up to which time she had still a lingering hope that some welcome shout from the hills above, which they were all to strain their ears to catch, might yet assure them that they were not wholly orphans, even though one parent should have perished. No shout, it may be supposed, was ever heard; nor could a shout, in any case, have been heard, for the night was one of tumultuous wind. And though, amidst its ravings, sometimes they fancied a sound of voices, still, in the dead lulls that now and then succeeded, they heard nothing to confirm their hopes. As last services to what she might now have called her own little family, Agnes took precautions against the drifting of the snow *within* the door and

within the imperfect window, which had caused them some discomfort on the preceding day; and finally, she adopted the most systematic and elaborate plans for preventing the possibility of their fire being extinguished, which, in the event of their being thrown upon the ultimate resource of their potatoes, would be absolutely indispensable to their existence; and in any case a main element of their comfort.

The night slipped away, and morning came, bringing with it no better hopes of any kind. Change there had been none, but for the worse. The snow had greatly increased in quantity; and the drifts seemed far more formidable. A second day passed like the first; little Agnes still keeping her young flock quiet, and tolerably comfortable; and still calling on all the elders in succession to say their prayers, morning and night.

A third day came; and whether on that or on the fourth, I do not now recollect, but on one or other there came a welcome gleam of hope. The arrangement of the snow-drifts had shifted during the night; and, though the wooden bridge was still impracticable, a low wall had been exposed, over which, by a circuit which evaded the brook, it seemed possible that a road might be found into Grasmere. In some walls it was necessary to force gaps; but this was effected without much difficulty, even by children; for the Westmoreland field walls are 'open,' that is, uncemented with mortar; and the push of a stick will generally detach so much from the upper part of any old crazy fence, as to lower it sufficiently for female or even for childish steps to pass. The little boys accompanied their sister until she came to the other side of the hill, which, lying more sheltered from the weather, offered a path onwards comparatively easy. Here they parted; and little Agnes pursued her solitary mission to the nearest house she could find accessible in Grasmere.

No house could have proved a wrong one in such a case. Miss Wordsworth and I often heard the description renewed, of the horror which, in an instant, displaced the smile of hospitable greeting, when little weeping Agnes told her sad tale. No tongue can express the fervid sympathy which travelled through the vale, like fire in an American forest, when it was learned that neither George nor Sarah Green had been seen by their children since the day of the Langdale sale. Within half-an-hour, or little more, from the remotest parts of the valley—some of them distant

nearly two miles from the point of rendezvous—all the men of Grasmere had assembled at the little cluster of cottages called 'Kirktown,' from its adjacency to the venerable parish Church of St. Oswald. There were at the time I settled in Grasmere—viz., in the spring of 1809, and, therefore, I suppose, in 1807–8, fifteen months previously—about sixty-three households in the vale; and the total number of souls was about 265 to 270; so that the number of fighting men would be about sixty or sixty-six, according to the common way of computing the proportion; and the majority were athletic and powerfully built.* Sixty, at least, after a short consultation as to the plan of operations, and for arranging the kind of signals by which they were to communicate from great distances, and in the perilous events of mists or snow-storms, set off with the speed of Alpine hunters to the hills. The dangers of the undertaking were considerable, under the uneasy and agitated state of the weather; and all the women of the vale were in the greatest anxiety, until night brought them back, in a body, unsuccessful. Three days at the least, and I rather think five, the search was ineffectual: which arose partly from the great extent of the ground to be examined, and partly from the natural mistake made of ranging almost exclusively during the earlier days on that part of the hills over which the path of Easedale might be presumed to have been selected under any reasonable latitude of circuitousness. But the fact is, when the fatal accident (for such it has often proved) of a permanent mist surprises a man on the hills, if he turns and loses his direction, he is a lost man; and without doing this so as to lose the power of *s'orienter* all at once, it is yet well known how difficult it is to avoid losing it insensibly and by degrees. Baffling snow-showers are the worst kinds of mists. And the poor Greens had, under that kind of confusion, wandered many a mile out of their proper track; so that to search for them upon any line indicated by the ordinary probabilities, would perhaps offer the slenderest chance for finding them.

The zeal of the people, meantime, was not in the least abated, but rather quickened, by the wearisome disappointments; every

* *Tait's* reads: 'so athletic and powerfully built that, at the village games of wrestling and leaping, Professor Wilson, and some visitors of his and mine, scarcely one of whom was under five feet eleven in height, with proportionable breadth, seem but middle sized men amongst the towering forms of the Dalesmen.'

hour of daylight was turned to account; no man of the valley ever came home to meals; and the reply of a young shoemaker, on the fourth night's return, speaks sufficiently for the unabated spirit of the vale. Miss Wordsworth asked what he would do on the next morning. 'Go up again, of course,' was his answer. But what if to-morrow also should turn out like all the rest? 'Why go up in stronger force on the day after.' Yet this man was sacrificing his own daily earnings without a chance of recompense. At length, sagacious dogs were taken up; and, about noonday, a shout from an aerial height, amongst thick volumes of cloudy vapour, propagated through repeating bands of men from a distance of many miles, conveyed as by telegraph into Grasmere the news that the bodies were found. George Green was lying at the bottom of a precipice, from which he had fallen. Sarah Green was found on the summit of the precipice; and, by laying together all the indications of what had passed, and reading into coherency the sad hieroglyphics of their last agonies, it was conjectured that the husband had desired his wife to pause for a few minutes, wrapping her, meantime, in his own greatcoat, whilst he should go forward and reconnoitre the ground, in order to catch a sight of some object (rocky peak, or tarn, or peat-field) which might ascertain their real situation. Either the snow above, already lying in drifts, or the blinding snow-storms driving into his eyes, must have misled him as to the nature of the circumjacent ground; for the precipice over which he had fallen was but a few yards from the spot in which he had quitted his wife. The depth of the descent and the fury of the wind (almost always violent on these cloudy altitudes) would prevent any distinct communication between the dying husband below and his despairing wife above, but it was believed by the shepherds, best acquainted with the ground and the range of sound, as regarded the capacities of the human ear under the probable circumstances of the storm, that Sarah might have caught, at intervals, the groans of her unhappy partner, supposing that his death were at all a lingering one. Others, on the contrary, supposed her to have gathered this catastrophe rather from the *want* of any sounds, and from his continued absence, than from any one distinct or positive expression of it; both because the smooth and unruffled surface of the snow where he lay seemed to argue that he had died without a struggle, perhaps without a groan; and because that tremendous sound of

'hurling' in the upper chambers of the air, which often accompanies a snow-storm, when combined with heavy gales of wind, would utterly suppress and stifle (as they conceived) any sound so feeble as those from a dying man. In any case, and by whatever sad language of sounds or signs, positive or negative, she might have learned or guessed her loss, it was generally agreed that the wild shrieks heard towards midnight in Langdalehead¹ announced the agonizing moment which brought to her now widowed heart the conviction of utter desolation and of final abandonment to her own solitary and fast-fleeting energies. It seemed probable that the *sudden* disappearance of her husband from her pursuing eyes would teach her to understand his fate; and that the consequent indefinite apprehension of instant death lying all around the point on which she sat, had kept her stationary to the very attitude in which her husband left her, until her failing powers, and the increasing bitterness of the cold, to one no longer in motion, would soon make those changes of place impossible, which too awfully had made themselves known as dangerous. The footsteps in some places, wherever drifting had not obliterated them, yet traceable as to the outline, though partially filled up with later falls of snow, satisfactorily showed that, however much they might have rambled, after crossing and doubling upon their own tracks, and many a mile astray from their right path, so they must have kept together to the very plateau or shelf of rock at which (*i.e.*, on which, and below which) their wanderings had terminated; for there were evidently no steps from this plateau in the retrograde order.

By the time they had reached this final stage of their erroneous course, all possibility of escape must have been long over for both alike; because their exhaustion must have been excessive

¹ I once heard, also, in talking with a Langdale family upon this tragic tale, that the sounds had penetrated into the valley of Little Langdale; which is possible enough. For, although this interesting recess of the entire Langdale basin (which bears somewhat of the same relation to Great Langdale that Easedale bears to Grasmere) does, in fact, lie beyond Langdalehead by the entire breadth of that dale, yet, from the singular accident of having its area raised far above the level of the adjacent vales, one most solitary section of Little Langdale (in which lies a tiny lake, and on the banks of that lake dwells one solitary family) being exactly at right angles both to Langdalehead and to the other complementary section of the Lesser Langdale, is brought into a position and an elevation virtually much nearer to objects (especially to audible objects) on the Easedale Fells. [Q]

before they could have reached a point so remote and high; and, unfortunately, the direct result of all this exhaustion had been to throw them farther off their home, or from 'any dwelling-place of man,' than they were at starting. Here, therefore, at this rocky pinnacle, hope was extinct for the wedded couple, but not perhaps for the husband. It was the impression of the vale, that, perhaps, within half-an-hour before reaching this fatal point, George Green might, had his conscience or his heart allowed him in so base a desertion, have saved himself singly, without any very great difficulty. It is to be hoped, however—and, for my part, I think too well of human nature to hesitate in believing—that not many, even amongst the meaner-minded and the least generous of men, could have reconciled themselves to the abandonment of a poor fainting female companion in such circumstances. Still, though not more than a most imperative duty, it was such a duty as most of his associates believed to have cost him (perhaps consciously) his life. It is an impressive truth—that sometimes in the very lowest forms of duty, less than which would rank a man as a villain, there is, nevertheless, the sublimest ascent of self-sacrifice. To do *less*, would class you as an object of eternal scorn: to do so much, presumes the grandeur of heroism. For his wife not only must have disabled him greatly by clinging to his arm for support; but it was known, from her peculiar character and manner, that she would be likely to rob him of his coolness and presence of mind, by too painfully fixing his thoughts, where her own would be busiest, upon their helpless little family. 'Stung with the thoughts of home'—to borrow the fine expression of Thomson, in describing a similar case—alternately thinking of the blessedness of that warm fireside at Blentarn Ghyll, which was not again to spread its genial glow through her freezing limbs, and of those darling little faces which, in this world, she was to see no more; unintentionally, and without being aware even of that result, she would rob the brave man (for such he was) of his fortitude, and the strong man of his *animal* resources. And yet (such, in the very opposite direction, was equally the impression universally through Grasmere), had Sarah Green foreseen, could her affectionate heart have guessed, even the tenth part of that love and neighbourly respect for herself which soon afterwards expressed themselves in showers of bounty to her children; could she have looked behind the curtain of destiny sufficiently to learn that the

very desolation of these poor children, which wrung her maternal heart, and doubtless constituted to her the sting of death, would prove the signal and the pledge of such anxious guardianship as not many rich men's children receive, and that this overflowing offering to her own memory would not be a hasty or decaying tribute of the first sorrowing sensibilities, but would pursue her children steadily until their hopeful settlement in life,—anything approaching this, known or guessed, would have caused her (so said all who knew her) to welcome the bitter end by which such privileges were to be purchased, and solemnly to breathe out into the ear of that holy angel who gathers the whispers of dying mothers torn asunder from their infants, a thankful *Nunc dimittis* (Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace), as the farewell ejaculation rightfully belonging to the occasion.

The funeral of the ill-fated Greens was, it may be supposed, attended by all the vale: it took place about eight days after they were found; and the day happened to be in the most perfect contrast to the sort of weather which prevailed at the time of their misfortune: some snow still remained here and there upon the ground; but the azure of the sky was unstained by a cloud; and a golden sunlight seemed to sleep, so balmy and tranquil was the season, upon the very hills where the pair had wandered—then a howling wilderness, but now a green pastoral lawn, in its lower ranges, and a glittering expanse of virgin snow, in its higher. George Green had, I believe, an elder family by a former wife; and it was for some of these children, who lived at a distance, and who wished to give their attendance at the grave, that the funeral was delayed. At this point, because really suggested by the contrast of the funeral tranquillity with the howling tempest of the fatal night, it may be proper to remind the reader of Wordsworth's memorial stanzas:—

'Who weeps for strangers? Many wept
For George and Sarah Green;
Wept for that pair's unhappy fate,
Whose graves may here be seen.

'By night upon these stormy fells,
Did wife and husband roam;
Six little ones at home had left,
And could not find that home.

'For *any* dwelling-place of man
As vainly did they seek—
He perish'd; and a voice was heard—
The widow's lonely shriek.

'Not many steps, and she was left
A body without life—
A few short steps were the chain that bound
The husband to the wife.

'*Now* do these sternly-featured hills
Look gently on this grave;
And quiet *now* are the depths of air,
As a sea without a wave.

'But deeper lies the heart of peace
In quiet more profound;
The heart of quietness is here
Within this churchyard bound.

'And from all agony of mind
It keeps them safe, and far
From fear and grief, and from all need
Of sun or guiding star.

'O darkness of the grave! how deep,
After that living night—
That last and dreary living one
Of sorrow and affright!

'O sacred marriage-bed of death!
That keeps them side by side
In bond of peace, in bond of love,
That may not be untied!'

After this solemn ceremony of the funeral was over—at which, by the way, I heard Miss Wordsworth declare that the grief of Sarah's illegitimate daughter was the most overwhelming she had ever witnessed—a regular distribution of the children was made

amongst the wealthier families of the vale. There had already, and before the funeral, been a perfect struggle to obtain one of the children, amongst all who had any facilities for discharging the duties of such a trust; and even the poorest had put in their claim to bear some part in the expenses of the case. But it was judiciously decided, that none of the children should be intrusted to any persons who seemed likely, either from old age or from slender means, or from nearer and more personal responsibilities, to be under the necessity of devolving the trust, sooner or later, upon strangers, who might have none of that interest in the children which attached, in the minds of the Grasmere people, to the circumstances that made them orphans. Two twins, who had naturally played together and slept together from their birth, passed into the same family: the others were dispersed; but into such kind-hearted and intelligent families, with continued opportunities of meeting each other on errands, or at church, or at sales, that it was hard to say which had the more comfortable home. And thus, in so brief a period as one fortnight, a household that, by health and strength, by the humility of poverty and by innocence of life, seemed sheltered from all attacks but those of time, came to be utterly broken up. George and Sarah Green slept in Grasmere Churchyard, never more to know the want of 'sun or guiding star.' Their children were scattered over wealthier houses than those of their poor parents, through the Vales of Grasmere or Rydal; and Blentarn Ghyll, after being shut up for a season, and ceasing for months to send up its little slender column of smoke at morning and evening, finally passed into the hands of a stranger.

The Wordsworths, meantime, acknowledged a peculiar interest in the future fortunes and education of the children. They had taken by much the foremost place in pushing the subscriptions on behalf of the family, feeling, no doubt, that when both parents, in any little sequestered community like that of Grasmere, are suddenly cut off by a tragical death, the children, in such a case, devolve by a sort of natural right and providential bequest on the other members of this community—that they energetically applied themselves to the task of raising funds by subscription; most of which, it is true, might not be wanted until future years should carry one after another of the children successively into different trades or occupations; but they well understood, that

more, by tenfold, would be raised under an immediate appeal to the sympathies of men, whilst yet burning fervently towards the sufferers in this calamity, than if the application were delayed until the money should be needed. I have mentioned that the Royal Family were made acquainted with the details of the case; that they were powerfully affected by the story, especially by the account of little Agnes, and her premature assumption of the maternal character; and that they contributed most munificently. Her Majesty, and three, at least, of her august daughters, were amongst the subscribers to the fund. For my part, I could have obtained a good deal from the careless liberality of Oxonian friends towards such a fund. But, knowing previously how little, in such an application, it would aid me to plead the name of Wordsworth as the founder of the subscription (a name that *now* would stand good for some thousands of pounds in that same Oxford—so passes the injustice as well as the glory of this world!)—knowing this, I did not choose to trouble anybody; and the more so, as Miss Wordsworth, upon my proposal to write to various ladies, upon whom I could have relied for their several contributions, wrote back to me, desiring that I would not; and upon this satisfactory reason—that the fund had already swelled under the Royal patronage, and the interest excited by so much of the circumstances as could be reported in hurried letters, to an amount beyond what was likely to be wanted for persons whom there was no good reason for pushing out of the sphere to which their birth had called them. The parish even was liable to give aid; and, in the midst of Royal bounty, this aid was not declined. Perhaps this was so far a solitary and unique case, that it might be the only one, in which some parochial Mr. Bumble found himself pulling in joint harness with the denizens of Windsor Castle, and a coadjutor of ‘Majesties’ and ‘Royal Highnesses.’ Finally, to complete their own large share in the charity, the Wordsworths took into their own family one of the children, a girl; * the least amiable, I believe, of the whole; slothful and sensual; so, at least, I imagined; for this girl it was, that in years to come caused by her criminal negligence the death of little Kate Wordsworth.

* *Tait's* reads: ‘... a girl, Sarah by name, the least amiable, I believe, of the whole; so, at least, I imagined; for this girl it was, and her criminal negligence, that in years to come inflicted the first heavy wound that I sustained in my affections, and first caused me to drink deeply from the cup of grief.’

From a gathering of years, far ahead of the events, looking back by accident to this whole little cottage romance of Blentarn Ghyll, with its ups and downs, its lights and shadows, and its fitful alternations, of grandeur derived from mountain solitude, and of humility derived from the very lowliest poverty, its little faithful Agnes keeping up her records of time in harmony with the mighty world outside, and feeding the single cow—the total 'estate' of the new-made orphans—I thought of that beautiful Persian apologue, where some slender drop, or crystallizing filament, within the shell of an oyster, fancies itself called upon to bewail its own obscure lot—consigned apparently and irretrievably to the gloomiest depths of the Persian Gulf. But changes happen, good and bad luck will fall out, even in the darkest depths of the Persian Gulf; and messages of joy can reach those that wait in silence, even where no post-horn has ever sounded. Behold! the slender filament has ripened into the most glorious of pearls. In a happy hour for himself, some diver from the blossoming forests of Ceylon brings up to heavenly light the matchless pearl; and very soon that solitary crystal drop, that had bemoaned its own obscure lot, finds itself glorifying the central cluster in the tiara bound upon the brow of him who signed himself 'King of kings,' the Shah of Persia, and that shook all Asia from the Indus to the Euphrates. Not otherwise was the lot of little Agnes—faithful to duties so suddenly revealed amidst terrors ghostly as well as earthly—paying down her first tribute of tears to an affliction that seemed past all relief, and such, that at first she with her brothers and sisters seemed foundering simultaneously with her parents in one mighty darkness. And yet, because, under the strange responsibilities which had suddenly surprised her, she sought counsel and strength from God, teaching her brothers and sisters to do the same, and seemed (when alone at midnight) to hear her mother's voice calling to her from the hills above, one moon had scarcely finished its circuit, before the most august ladies on our planet were reading, with sympathizing tears, of Agnes Green; and from the towers of Windsor Castle came gracious messages of inquiry to little, lowly Blentarn Ghyll.

In taking leave of this subject, I may mention, by the way, that accidents of this nature are not by any means so uncommon in the mountainous districts of Cumberland and Westmoreland, as

the reader might infer from the intensity of the excitement which waited on the catastrophe of the Greens. In that instance, it was not the simple death by cold upon the hills, but the surrounding circumstances, which invested the case with its agitating power: the fellowship in death of a wife and husband; the general impression that the husband had perished in his generous devotion to his wife (a duty, certainly, and no more than a duty, but still, under the instincts of self-preservation, a generous duty); sympathy with their long agony, as expressed by their long ramblings, and the earnestness of their efforts to recover their home; awe for the long concealment which rested upon their fate; and pity for the helpless condition of the children, so young, and so instantaneously made desolate, and so nearly perishing through the loneliness of their situation, co-operating with stress of weather, had they not been saved by the prudence and timely exertions of a little girl not much above eight years old;—these were the circumstances and necessary adjuncts of the story which pointed and sharpened the public feelings on that occasion. Else the mere general case of perishing upon the mountains is not, unfortunately, so rare, in *any* season of the year, as for itself alone to command a powerful tribute of sorrow from the public mind. Natives as well as strangers, shepherds as well as tourists, have fallen victims, even in summer, to the misleading and confounding effects of deep mists. Sometimes they have continued to wander unconsciously in a small circle of two or three miles; never coming within hail of a human dwelling, until exhaustion has forced them into a sleep which has proved their last. Sometimes a sprain or injury, that disabled a foot or leg, has destined them to die by the shocking death of hunger.¹ Sometimes a fall from the

¹ The case of Mr. Gough, who perished in the bosom of Helvellyn, and was supposed by some to have been disabled by a sprain of the ankle, whilst others believed him to have received that injury and his death simultaneously in a fall from the lower shelf of a precipice, became well known to the public, in all its details, through the accident of having been recorded in verse by two writers nearly at the same time, viz., Sir Walter Scott and Wordsworth. But here, again, as in the case of the Greens, it was not the naked fact of his death amongst the solitudes of the mountains that would have won the public attention, or have obtained the honour of a metrical commemoration. Indeed, to say the truth, the general sympathy with this tragic event was not derived chiefly from the unhappy tourist's melancholy end, for that was too shocking to be even hinted at by either of the two writers (in fact, there was too much reason to fear that it had been the lingering death of famine)—not the personal sufferings of the principal figure in

the little drama—but the sublime and mysterious fidelity of the secondary figure, his dog; this it was which won the imperishable remembrance of the vales, and which accounted for the profound interest that immediately gathered round the incidents—an interest that still continues to hallow the memory of the dog. Not the dog of Athens, nor the dog of Pompeii, so well deserve the immortality of history or verse. Mr. Gough was a young man, belonging to the Society of Friends, who took an interest in the mountain scenery of the Lake district, both as a lover of the picturesque and as a man of science. It was in this latter character, I believe, that he had ascended Helvellyn at the time when he met his melancholy end. From his familiarity with the ground—for he had been an annual visitant to the Lakes—he slighted the usual precaution of taking a guide. Mist, unfortunately—impenetrable volumes of mist—came floating over (as so often they do) from the gloomy fells that compose a common centre for Easedale, Langdale, Eskdale, Borrowdale, Wastdale, Gatesgarthdale (pronounced Keska-dale), and Ennerdale. Ten or fifteen minutes afford ample time for this aerial navigation: within that short interval, sunlight, moonlight, starlight, alike disappear; all paths are lost; vast precipices are concealed, or filled up by treacherous draperies of vapour; the points of the compass are irrecoverably confounded; and one vast cloud, too often the cloud of death even to the experienced shepherd, sits like a vast pavilion upon the summits and gloomy coves of Helvellyn. Mr. Gough ought to have allowed for this not unfrequent accident, and for its bewildering effects, under which all local knowledge (even that of shepherds) becomes in an instant unavailing. What was the course and succession of his dismal adventures, after he became hidden from the world by the vapoury screen, could not be fully deciphered even by the most sagacious of mountaineers, although, in most cases, they manifest an Indian truth of eye, together with an Indian felicity of weaving all the signs that the eye can gather into a significant tale, by connecting links of judgment and natural inference, especially where the whole case ranges within certain known limits of time and of space. But in this case two accidents forbade the application of their customary skill to the circumstances. One was, the want of snow at the time, to receive the impression of his feet; the other, the unusual length of time through which his remains lay undiscovered. He had made the ascent at the latter end of October, a season when the final garment of snow, which clothes Helvellyn from the setting in of winter to the sunny days of June, has frequently not made its appearance. He was not discovered until the following spring, when a shepherd, traversing the coves of Helvellyn or of Fairfield in quest of a stray sheep, was struck by the unusual sound (and its echo from the neighbouring rocks) of a short quick bark, or cry of distress, as if from a dog or young fox. Mr. Gough had not been missed; for those who saw or knew of his ascent from the Wyburn side of the mountain, took it for granted that he had fulfilled his intention of descending in the opposite direction into the valley of Patterdale, or into the Duke of Norfolk's deer-park on Ullswater, or possibly into Matterdale; and that he had finally quitted the country by way of Penrith. Having no reason, therefore, to expect a domestic animal in a region so far from human habitations, the shepherd was the more surprised at the sound, and its continued iteration. He followed its guiding, and came to a deep hollow, near the awful curtain of rock called *Striding-Edge*. There, at the foot of a tremendous precipice, lay the body of the unfortunate tourist; and, watching by his side, a meagre shadow, literally reduced to a skin and to bones that could be counted (for it is a matter of absolute demonstration that he never could have obtained either food or shelter through his long winter's imprisonment), sat this most faithful of servants—mounting guard upon his

summit of awful precipices has dismissed them from the anguish of perplexity in the extreme, from the conflicts of hope and fear, by dismissing them at once from life. Sometimes also, the mountainous solitudes have been made the scenes of remarkable suicides: In particular, there was a case, a little before I came into the country, of a studious and meditative young boy, who found no pleasure but in books and the search after knowledge. He languished with a sort of despairing nympholepsy after intellectual pleasures—for which he felt too well assured that *his* term of allotted time, the short period of years through which his relatives had been willing to support him at St. Bees, was rapidly drawing to an end. In fact, it was just at hand; and he was sternly required to take a long farewell of the poets and geometricians, for whose sublime contemplations he hungered and thirsted. One week was to have transferred him to some huxtering concern, which not in any spirit of pride he ever affected to despise, but which in utter alienation of heart he loathed; as one whom nature, and his own diligent cultivation of the opportunities recently opened to him for a brief season, had dedicated to a far different service. He mused—revolved his situation in his own mind—computed his power to liberate himself from the bondage of dependency—calculated the chances of his ever obtaining this liberation, from change in the position of his family, or revolution in his own fortunes—and, finally, attempted conjecturally to determine the amount of effect which his new and illiberal employments might have upon his own mind in weaning him from his present elevated tasks, and unfitting him for their enjoyment in distant years, when circumstances might again place it in his power to indulge them.

These meditations were in part communicated to a friend; and in part, also, the result to which they brought him. That this result was gloomy, his friend knew; but not, as in the end it

master's honoured body, and protecting it (as he *had* done effectually) from all violation by the birds of prey which haunt the central solitudes of Helvellyn:—

‘How nourish’d through that length of time,
He knows, who gave that love sublime,
And sense of loyal duty—great
Beyond all human estimate.’

[Q.]

appeared, that it was despairing. Such, however, it was; and accordingly, having satisfied himself that the chances of a happier destiny were for him slight or none, and having, by a last fruitless effort, ascertained that there was no hope whatever of mollifying his relatives, or of obtaining a year's delay of his sentence, he walked quietly up to the cloudy wildernesses within Blencathara; read his *Æschylus* (read, perhaps, those very scenes of the 'Prometheus' that pass amidst the wild valleys of the Caucasus, and below the awful summits, untrod by man, of the ancient Elborus); read him for the last time; for the last time fathomed the abyss-like subtleties of his favourite geometrician, the mighty Apollonius; for the last time retraced some parts of the narrative, so simple in its natural grandeur, composed by that imperial captain, the most majestic man of ancient history—

'The foremost man of all this world' *

Julius the Dictator, the eldest of the Cæsars. These three authors—*Æschylus*, Apollonius, and Cæsar—he studied until the daylight waned, and the stars began to appear. Then he made a little pile of the three volumes, that served him for a pillow; took a dose, such as he had heard would be sufficient, of laudanum; laid his head upon the monuments which he himself seemed in fancy to have raised to the three mighty spirits; and, with his face upturned to the heavens and the stars, slipped quietly away into a sleep upon which no morning ever dawned. The laudanum—whether it were from the effect of the open air, or from some peculiarity of temperament—had not produced sickness in the first stage of its action, nor convulsions in the last. But, from the serenity of his countenance, and from the tranquil maintenance of his original supine position—for his head was still pillowed upon the three intellectual Titans, Greek and Roman, and his eyes were still directed towards the stars—it would appear that he had died placidly, and without a struggle. In this way the imprudent boy, who, like Chatterton, would not wait for the change that a day might bring, obtained the liberty he sought. I describe him as doing whatsoever he had described himself in his last conversations as wishing to do; for whatsoever, in his last scene of life, was not explained by the objects and the arrangement of the

* *Julius Caesar*, IV. iii. 22.

objects about him, found a sufficient solution in the confidential explanations of his purposes, which he had communicated, so far as he felt it safe, to his only friend.¹

From this little special episode, where the danger was of a more exceptional kind, let us fall back on the more ordinary case of shepherds, whose duties, in searching after missing sheep, or after sheep surprised by sudden snowdrifts, are too likely, in all seasons of severity, to force them upon facing dangers which, in relation to their natural causes, must for ever remain the same. This uniformity it is, this monotony of the danger, which authorizes our surprise and our indignation, that long ago the resources of art and human contrivance, in any one of many possible modes, should not have been applied to the relief of an evil so constantly recurrent. A danger, that has no fixed root in our social system, suggests its own natural excuse, when it happens to be neglected. But this evil is one of frightful ruin when it *does* take effect, and of eternal menace when it does *not*. In some years it has gone near to the depopulation of a whole pastoral hamlet, as respects the most vigorous and hopeful part of its male population; and annually it causes, by its mere contemplation, the heartache to many a young wife and many an anxious mother. In reality, amongst all pastoral districts, where the field of their labour lies in mountainous tracts, an allowance is as regularly made for the loss of human life, by mists or storms suddenly enveloping the hills, and surprising the shepherds, as for the loss of sheep; some proportion out of each class—shepherds and sheep—is considered as a kind of tithe-offering to the stern Goddess of Calamity, and in the light of a ransom for those who escape. Grahame, the author of ‘The Sabbath,’ says, that (confining himself to Scotland) he has known winters in which a single parish lost as many as ten shepherds. And this mention of Grahame reminds me of a useful and feasible plan proposed by him for obviating the main pressure of such sudden perils, amidst snow, and solitude, and night. I call it feasible with good reason; for Grahame, who doubtless had made the calculations, declares that, for so trifling a sum as a few hundred pounds, every square mile in the southern counties of

¹ This story has been made the subject of a separate poem, entitled ‘The Student of St. Bees,’ by my friend Mr. James Payn of Cambridge. The volume is published by Macmillan, Cambridge, and contains thoughts of great beauty, too likely to escape the vapid and irreflective reader. [Q.]

Scotland (that is, I presume, throughout the Lowlands) might be fitted up with his apparatus. He prefaces his plan by one general remark, to which I believe that every mountaineer will assent—viz., that the vast majority of deaths in such cases is owing to the waste of animal power in trying to recover the right direction; and, probably, it *would* be recovered in a far greater number of instances, were the advance persisted in according to any unity of plan. But, partly, the distraction of mind and irresolution, under such circumstances, cause the wanderer frequently to change his direction voluntarily, according to any new fancy that starts up to beguile him; and, partly, he changes it often insensibly and unconsciously, from the same cause which originally led him astray. Obviously, therefore, the primary object would be to compensate the loss of distinct vision—which, for the present, is irreparable in that form—by substituting an appeal to another sense. That error, which has been caused by the obstruction of the eye, may be corrected by the sounder information of the ear. Let crosses, such as are raised for other purposes in Catholic lands, be planted at intervals—suppose of one mile—in every direction. ‘Snow-storms,’ says Grahame, ‘are almost always accompanied with wind. Suppose, then, a pole, fifteen feet high, well fixed in the ground, with two cross spars placed near the bottom, to denote the “airs” (or points of the compass); a bell hung at the top of this pole, with a piece of flat wood (attached to it) projecting upwards, would ring with the slightest breeze. As they would be purposely made to have different tones, the shepherd would soon be able to distinguish one from another. He could never be more than a mile from one or other of them. On coming to the spot, he would at once know the points of the compass, and, of course, the direction in which his home lay.’ *

* *Tait's* explains: ‘This is part of the note attached to the “Winter Sabbath Walk,” and particularly referring to the following picturesque passages:—

“Now is the time
To visit Nature in her grand attire;
Though perilous the mountainous ascent,
A noble recompense the danger brings.
How beautiful the plain stretch'd far below!
Unvaried though it be, save by yon stream
With azure windings, or the leafless wood.
But what the beauty of the plain compar'd
To that sublimity which reigns enthron'd,

Another protecting circumstance would rise out of the simplicity of manners, which is pretty sure to prevail in a mountainous region, and the pious tenderness universally felt towards those situations of peril which are incident to all alike—men and women, parents and children, the strong and the weak. The

Holding joint rule with solitude divine,
Among yon rocky fells that bid defiance
To steps the most adventurously bold?
There silence dwells profound; or, if the cry
Of high-pois'd eagle break at times the calm,
The mantled echoes no response return.

“But let me now explore the deep-sunk dell
No foot-print, save the covey's or the flock's,
Is seen along the rill, where marshy springs
Still rear the grassy blade of vivid green.
Beware, ye shepherds, of these treacherous haunts;
Nor linger there too long: the wintry day
Soon closes; and full oft a heavier fall,
Heaped by the blast, fills up the shelter'd glen,
While, gurgling deep below, the buried rill
Mines for itself a snow-coved way. O then
Your helpless charge drive from the tempting spot;
And keep them on the bleak hill's stormy side,
Where night-winds sweep the gathering drift away.”

‘A more useful suggestion was never made. Many thousands of lives would be saved in each century by the general adoption of Mr. Grahame's plan; and two or three further hints may be added. 1. Before these crosses can be sown as plentifully as he proposes, it will, in a large majority of cases, answer the same end, to make such an approximation of his plan as would not cost, perhaps, more than one quarter of the first expense, viz; by placing the crosses at such distances that the bell might make itself heard: suppose the interval to be four miles, then the greatest *possible* distance from the sound would be two miles; and so far a bell might send its sound upon the breeze, for there will be always some of these crosses to windward. 2. They might be made of cast-iron—as one means of ensuring their preservation. 3. There might be a box, or little cell attached, capable of receiving one person; this should be suspended at a height, suppose of eight feet, from the ground; and the entrance should be by a little ladder leading into the box through an orifice from below; which orifice should be covered by a little door or lid—one that should open inwards when pressed by the head of the ascending person. Finally, in a country where mile-stones and guide-posts are often wantonly mutilated or destroyed, it may be thought that these crosses would not long be in a condition to do their office; in particular, that the bells would be detached and carried off. But it should be remembered, that even mile-stones on the most public roads have ceased to be injured since they have been made of iron; that these crosses never would be in a populous region, but exactly in the most solitary places of the island; and that in any case where they ceased to be solitary, *there* the crosses would cease to be necessary.’

crosses, I would answer for it, whenever they are erected, will be protected by a superstition, such as that which in Holland protects the stork. But it would be right to strengthen this feeling, by instilling it as a principle of duty in the catechisms of mountainous regions; and perhaps, also, in order to invest this duty with a religious sanctity, at the approach of every winter, there might be read from the altar a solemn commination, such as that which the English Church appoints for Ash-Wednesday—'Cursed is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark,' etc.; to which might now be added,—'Cursed is he that causeth the steps of the wayfarer to go astray, and layeth snares for the wanderer on the hills: cursed is he that removeth the bell from the snow-cross.' And every child might learn to fear a judgment of retribution upon its own steps in case of any such wicked action, by reading the tale of that Scottish sea-rover, who, in order

'To plague the Abbot of Aberbrothock,' *

removed the bell from the Inchcape Rock; which same rock, in after days, and for want of this very warning bell, inflicted miserable ruin upon himself, his ship, and his crew.† Once made sacred from violation, these crosses might afterwards be made subjects of suitable ornament; that is to say, they might be made as picturesque in form, and colour, and material, as the crosses of Alpine countries or the guide-posts of England often are. The associated circumstances of storm and solitude, of winter, of night, and wayfaring, would give dignity to almost any form which had become familiar to the eye as the one appropriated to this purpose; and the particular form of a cross or crucifix, besides its own beauty, would suggest to the mind a pensive

* Slightly misquoted from Southey's 'The Inchcape Rock'.

† *Tait's* continues: 'Warning sentences should also be inscribed upon all the four faces of the little cell, that nobody might offend in a spirit of jest or forgetfulness; and as the century advanced, a memorial list, (like the Roman *votive tablets*, suspended to the walls of temples,) should be firmly attached to the cross, of all who had benefited by its shelter. The mere fact of having ascended the ladder being taken as sufficient evidence that a sanctuary had been found necessary. The sanctity of the place might, in one generation, be so far improved as to protect a small supply of brandy and biscuit, to be lodged there on the coming on of winter. If a few rockets, and some apparatus for lighting a match were also left accessible in some of the remoter solitudes, the storm-bound and exhausted wanderer would, besides recruiting his strength, find it possible to telegraph his situation to some one of the neighbouring valleys. Once made sacred from . . .'

allegoric memorial of that spiritual asylum offered by the same emblem to the poor erring roamer in our human pilgrimage, whose steps are beset with other snares, and whose heart is bewildered by another darkness and another storm—by the darkness of guilt, or by the storm of affliction.*

* *Tait's* continues: 'If iron was found too costly, it might be used only for the little cell; and the rest of the structure might be composed with no expense at all, except the labour, (and that would generally be given by public contribution of the neighbourhood,) from the rude undressed stones which are always found lying about in such situations, and which are so sufficient for all purposes of strength, that the field-walls, and by far the greater number of dwelling-houses in Westmoreland, are built of such materials, and, until late years, without mortar.** But, whatever were the materials, the name of these rural guides and asylums—"storm-crosses"—would continually remind both the natives and strangers of their purpose and functions—functions that, in the process of time, would make them as interesting to the imagination and to the memory, as they would, in fact, be useful and hope-sustaining to the shepherd surprised by snow, and the traveller surprised by night.'

** This recent change in the art of rustic masonry by the adoption of mortar, does not mark any advance in that art, but, on the contrary, a decay of skill and care. Twenty years ago, when 'dry' walls were in general use except for a superior class of houses, it was necessary to supply the want of mortar by a much nicer adaptation of the stones to each other. But now this care is regarded as quite superfluous; for the largest gaps and cavities amongst the stone are filled up with mortar, meantime, the walls built in this way are not so impervious either to rain or wind as those upon the old patent construction of the past generation.

THE SARACEN'S HEAD *

MY first visit to the Wordsworths had been made in November, 1807; but, on that occasion, from the necessity of saving the Michaelmas term at Oxford, for which I had barely left myself time, I stayed only one week. On the last day, I witnessed a scene, the first and the last of its kind that ever I *did* witness, almost too trivial to mention, except for the sake of showing what things occur in the realities of experience which a novelist could not venture to imagine. Wordsworth and his sister were under an engagement of some standing to dine on that day with a literary lady about four miles distant; and, as the southern mail, which I was to catch at a distance of eighteen miles, would not pass that point until long after midnight, Miss Wordsworth proposed that, rather than pass my time at an inn, I should join the dinner party; a proposal rather more suitable to her own fervent and hospitable temper, than to the habits of our hostess, who must (from what I came to know of her in after years) have looked upon me as an intruder. Something *had* reached Miss Wordsworth of her penurious *ménage*, but nothing that approached the truth. I was presented to the lady, whom we found a perfect *bas bleu* of a very commonplace order, but having some other accomplishments beyond her slender acquaintance with literature. Our party consisted of six—our hostess, who might be about fifty years of age; a pretty timid young woman, who was there in the character of a humble friend; some stranger or other; the Wordsworths, and myself. The dinner was the very humblest and simplest I had ever seen—in that there was nothing to offend—I did not then know that the lady was very rich—but also it was flagrantly insufficient in quantity. Dinner, however, proceeded; when, without any removals, in came a kind of second course, in the shape of a solitary pheasant. This, in a cold manner, she asked me to try; but we, in our humility, declined for the present; and also in mere good-nature, not wishing to expose too palpably the insufficiency of her dinner. May I die the death of a traitor, if she

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for December 1839

did not proceed, without further question to any one of us, (and as to the poor young companion, no form of even invitation was conceded to her,) and, in the eyes of us all, eat up the whole bird, from alpha to omega. Upon my honour, I thought to myself, this is a scene I would not have missed. It is well to know the possibilities of human nature. Could she have a bet depending on the issue, and would she explain all to us as soon as she had won her wager? Alas! no explanation ever came, except, indeed, that afterwards her character, put *en evidence* upon a score of occasions, too satisfactorily explained everything. No; it was, as Mr. Coleridge expresses it, a psychological curiosity—a hollow thing—and only once matched in all the course of my reading, in or out of romances; but that once, I grieve to say it, was by a king, and a sort of hero. The Duchess of Marlborough it is, who reports the shocking anecdote of William III., that actually Princess Anne, his future wife, durst not take any of the green peas brought to the dinner table, when that vegetable happened to be as yet scarce and premature. *There* was a gentleman! And such a lady had we for our hostess. However, we all observed a suitable gravity; but afterwards, when we left the house, the remembrance affected us differently: Miss Wordsworth laughed with undissembled glee; but Wordsworth thought it too grave a matter for laughing—he was thoroughly disgusted; and said repeatedly, a person cannot be honest, positively not honest, who is capable of such an act. The lady is dead, and I shall not mention her name: she lived only to gratify her selfish propensities; and two little anecdotes may shew the outrageous character of her meanness. I was now on the debtor side of her dinner account, and, therefore, in a future year she readily accepted an invitation to come and dine with me at the cottage. But, on a subsequent occasion, when I was to have a few literary people at dinner, whom I knew that she greatly wished to meet, she positively replied thus:—‘No; I have already come with my young lady to dine with you; that puts me on the wrong side by one; now if I were to come again, as I cannot leave Miss —— behind, I shall then be on the wrong side by three; and that is more than I could find opportunities to repay before I go up to London for the winter.’—‘Very well,’ I said, ‘give me 3s. and *that* will settle the account.’ She laughed, but positively persisted in not coming until after dinner, notwithstanding she had to drive a distance of ten miles. The

other anecdote is worse. She was exceedingly careful of her health; and not thinking it healthy to drive about in a close carriage, which, besides, could not have suited the narrow mountain tracks, to which her sketching habits attracted her, she shut up her town carriage for the summer, and jobbed some little open car. Being a very large woman, and, moreover, a masculine woman, with a bronzed complexion, and always choosing to wear, at night, a turban, round hair that was as black as that of the 'Moors of Malabar,' she presented an exact likeness of a Saracen's Head, as painted over inn-doors; whilst the timid and delicate young lady, by her side, looked like 'dejected Pity' at the side of 'Revenge,' when assuming the war-denouncing trumpet. Some Oxonians and Cantabs, who, at different times, were in the habit of meeting this oddly assorted party in all nooks of the country, used to move the question, whether the poor horse or the young lady had the worst of it. At length the matter was decided: the horse was fast going off this sublunary stage; and the Saracen's Head was told as much, and with this little addition—that his death was owing *inter alia* to starvation. Her answer was remarkable:—'But, my dear madam, that is his master's fault; I pay so much a-day—he is to keep the horse.' That might be, but still the horse was dying—and dying in the way stated. The Saracen's Head persisted in using him under those circumstances—such was her 'bond'—and, in a short time, the horse actually died. Yes, the horse died—and died of starvation—or at least of an illness caused originally by starvation; for so said, not merely the whole population of the little neighbouring town, but also the surgeon. Not long after, however, the lady, the Saracen's Head, died herself; but, I fear, *not* of starvation; for, though something like it did prevail at her table, she prudently reserved it all for her guests; in fact, I never heard of such vigilant care, and so much laudable exertion applied to the promotion of health: yet all failed, and in a degree which confounded people's speculations upon the subject—for she did not live much beyond sixty; whereas everybody supposed that the management of her physical system entitled her to outwear a century. Perhaps the prayers of horses might avail to order it otherwise. But the singular thing about this lady's mixed and contradictory character was—that, in London and Bath, where her peculiar habits of life were naturally less accurately known, she maintained the reputation of one who

united the accomplishments of literature and art with a remarkable depth of sensibility, and a most amiable readiness to enter into the distresses of her friends, by sympathy the most cordial, and consolation the most delicate. More than once I have seen her name recorded in printed books, and attended with praises that tended to this effect. I have seen letters also, from a lady in deep affliction, which spoke of the Saracen's Head as having paid her the first visit from which she drew any effectual consolation. Such are the erroneous impressions conveyed by biographical memoirs; or, which is a more charitable construction of the case, such are the inconsistencies of the human heart! And certainly there was one fact, even in her Westmoreland life, that *did* lend some countenance to the southern picture of her amiableness—and this lay in the cheerfulness with which she gave up her time (*time*, but not much of her redundant money) to the promotion of the charitable schemes set on foot by the neighbouring ladies; sometimes for the education of poor children, sometimes for the visiting of the sick, etc., etc. I have heard several of those ladies express their gratitude for her exertions, and declare that she was about their best member. But their horror was undisguised when the weekly committee came, by rotation, to hold its sittings at her little villa; for, as the business occupied them frequently from eleven o'clock in the forenoon to a late dinner hour, and as many of them had a fifteen or twenty miles' drive, they needed some refreshments: but these were, of course, a 'great idea' at the Saracen's Head; since, according to the epigram which illustrates the maxim of Tacitus, that *omne ignotum pro magnifico*, and, applying it to the case of a miser's horse, terminates by saying, 'What vast ideas must he have of oats!'—upon the same principle, these poor ladies, on those fatal committee days, never failed to form most exaggerated ideas of bread, butter, and wine. And at length, some more intrepid than the rest, began to carry biscuits in their muffs, and, with the conscious tremors of school girls (profiting by the absence of the mistress, but momentarily expecting detection,) they employed some casual absence of their unhostly hostess in distributing and eating their hidden 'viaticum.' However, it must be acknowledged, that time and exertion, and the sacrifice of more selfish pleasures during the penance at the school, were, after all, real indications of kindness to her fellow-creatures; and, as I wish to part in peace, even with the Saracen's

Head, I have reserved this anecdote to the last; for it is painful to have lived on terms of good nature, and exchanging civilities, with any human being, of whom one can report absolutely *no* good thing: and I sympathize heartily with that indulgent person of whom it is somewhere recorded, that upon an occasion when the death of a man happened to be mentioned, who was unanimously pronounced a wretch without one good quality, '*monstrum nullâ virtute redemptum*,' he ventured, however, at last, in a deprecatory tone to say—'Well, he did *whistle* beautifully, at any rate.'

Talking of 'whistling,' reminds me to return from my digression; for on that night, the 12th of November, 1807, and the last of my visits to the Wordsworths, I took leave of them in the inn at Ambleside, about ten at night; and the post-chaise in which I crossed the country to catch the mail, was driven by a postillion who whistled so delightfully, that, for the first time in my life, I became aware of the prodigious powers which are lodged potentially in so despised a function of the vocal organs. For the whole of the long ascent up Orrest Head, which obliged him to walk his horses for a full half-mile, he made the woods of Windermere ring with the canorous sweetness of his half flute half clarionet music; but, in fact, the subtle melody of the effect placed it in power far beyond either flute or clarionet. A year or two afterwards, I heard a fellow-servant of this same postillion's, a black, play with equal superiority of effect upon the jew's harp; making that, which in most hands is a mere monotonous jarring, a dull reverberating vibration, into a delightful lyre of no inconsiderable compass. We have since heard of, some of us have heard, the chinchopper. Within the last hundred years, we have had the Æolian harp, (first mentioned and described in the 'Castle of Indolence,' which I think was first published entire about 1738;)* then the musical glasses; then the *celestina*, to represent the music of the spheres, introduced by Mr. Walker, or some other lecturing astronomer; and many another fine effect obtained from trivial means. But, at this moment, I recollect a performance perhaps more astonishing than any of them: a Mr. Worgman, who had very good introductions, and very general ones, (for he was to be met within a few months in every part of the island,) used to accompany himself on the piano, weaving *extempore* long tissues

* *The Castle of Indolence* was first published in 1748.

of impassioned music, that were called his own, but which, in fact, were all the better for not being such, or at least for continually embodying passages from Handel and Pergolesi. To this substratum of the instrumental music, he contrived to adapt some unaccountable and indescribable choral accompaniment, a pomp of sound, a tempestuous blare of harmony ascending in clouds, not from any one, but apparently from a band of Mr. Worgman's; for sometimes it was a trumpet, sometimes a kettle-drum, sometimes a cymbal, sometimes a bassoon, and sometimes it was all of these at once.

'And now 'twas like all instruments;
And now it was a flute;
And now it was an angel's voice,
That maketh the heaven's be mute.'

In this case, I presume, that ventriloquism must have had something to do with the effect; but, whatever it were, the power varied greatly with the state of his spirits, or with some other fluctuating causes in the animal economy. However, the result of all these experiences is, that I shall never more be surprised at any musical effects, the very greatest, drawn from whatever inconsiderable or apparently inadequate means; not even if the butcher's instrument, the marrow-bones and cleaver, or any of those culinary instruments so pleasantly treated by Addison in the 'Spectator,' such as the kitchen dresser and thumb, the tongs and shovel, the pepper and salt-box, should be exalted, by some immortal butcher or inspired scullion, into a sublime harp, dulcimer, or lute, capable of wooing St. Cecilia to listen, able even

'To raise a mortal to the skies,
Or draw an angel down.'

That night, as I was passing under the grounds of Elleray, then belonging to a Westmoreland 'statesman,' a thought struck me, that I was now traversing a road with which, as yet, I was scarcely at all acquainted, but which, in years to come, might perhaps be as familiar to my eye as the rooms of my own house; and possibly that I might traverse them in company with faces as yet not even seen by me, but in those future years dearer than any which I had yet known. In this prophetic glimpse there was nothing very marvellous; for what could be more natural than that I should

come to reside in the neighbourhood of the Wordsworths, and that this might lead to my forming connections in a country which I should consequently come to know so well? I did not, however, anticipate so definitely and circumstantially as all this; but generally I had a dim presentiment that here, on this very road, I should often pass, and in company that now, not even conjecturally delineated or drawn out of the utter darkness in which they were as yet reposing, would hereafter plant memories in my heart, the last that will fade from it in the hour of death. Here, afterwards, at this very spot, or a little above it, but on this very estate, which, from local peculiarities of ground, and of sudden angles, was peculiarly *kenspeck*, i.e. easy of recognition, and could have been challenged and identified at any distance of years—here afterwards lived Professor Wilson, the only very intimate male friend I have had—here, too, it was, my M.,* that, in long years afterwards, through many a score of nights—nights often dark as Erebus, and amidst thunders and lightnings the most sublime—we descended at twelve, one, and two o'clock at night, speeding from Kendal to our distant home, twenty miles away. Thou wert at present a child not nine years old, nor had I seen thy face, nor heard thy name. But within nine years from that same night thou wert seated by my side;—and, thenceforwards, through a period of fourteen years, how often did we two descend, hand locked in hand, and thinking of things to come, at a pace of hurricane; whilst all the sleeping woods about us re-echoed the uproar of trampling hoofs and groaning wheels. Duly as we mounted the crest of Orrest Head, mechanically and of themselves almost, and spontaneously, without need of voice or spur, according to Westmoreland usage, the horses flew off into a gallop, like the pace of a swallow:¹ it was a railroad pace that we

¹ It may be supposed not literally, for the swallow (or at least that species called the Swift) has been known to fly at the rate of 300 miles an hour. Very probably, however, this pace was not deduced from an entire hour's performance, but estimated by proportion from a flight of one or two minutes. An interesting anecdote is told by the gentleman (I believe the Rev. E. Stanley) who described in *Blackwood's Magazine* the opening of the earliest English railway—viz. that a bird (snipe was it, or field-fare, or plover?) ran, or rather flew, a race with the engine for three or four miles, until finding itself likely to be beaten, it then suddenly wheeled away into the moors. [Q.]

* Margaret Simpson, a Westmorland 'Statesman's daughter, whom De Quincey married in 1817.

ever maintained; objects were descried far ahead in one moment, and in the next were crowding into the rear. Three miles and a half did this storm-flight continue, for so long the descent lasted. Then for many a mile, over undulating ground, did we ultimately creep and fly, until again a long precipitous movement, again a storm-gallop, that hardly suffered the feet to touch the ground, gave warning that we drew near to that beloved cottage; warning to us—warning to them—

‘The silence that is here
Is of the grave, and of austere
But happy feelings of the dead.’

Sometimes the nights were bright with cloudless moonlight, and of that awful breathless quiet which often broods over vales that are peculiarly landlocked, and which is, or seems to be, so much more expressive of a solemn hush and a Sabbath-like rest from the labours of nature, than I remember to have experienced in flat countries:—

‘It is not quiet—is not peace—
But something deeper far than these.’

And on such nights it was no sentimental refinement, but a sincere and hearty feeling, that, in wheeling past the village churchyard of Stavely, something like an outrage seemed offered to the sanctity of its graves, by the uproar of our career. Sometimes the nights were of that pitchy darkness which is more palpable and unfathomable wherever hills intercept the gleaming of light which otherwise is usually seen to linger about the horizon in the northern quarter; and then arose in perfection that striking effect, when the glare of lamps searches for one moment every dark recess of the thickets, forces them into sudden, almost daylight revelation, only to leave them within the twinkling of the eye in darkness more profound; making them, like the snow-flakes falling upon a cataract, ‘one moment bright, then gone for ever.’ But, dark or moonlight alike, in every instance throughout so long a course of years, the road was entirely our own for the whole twenty miles. After nine o’clock, not many people are abroad; after ten, absolutely none, upon the roads of Westmoreland; a circumstance which gives a peculiar solemnity to a

traveller's route amongst these quiet valleys upon a summer evening of latter May, of June, or early July; since, in a latitude so much higher than that of London, broad day light prevails to an hour long after nine. Nowhere is the holiness of vesper hours more deeply felt. And now, in 1839, from all these flying journeys and their stinging remembrances, hardly a wreck survives of what composed their living equipage: the men who chiefly drove in those days (for I have ascertained it) are gone; the horses are gone; darkness rests upon all, except myself. I, woe is me! am the solitary survivor from scenes that now seem to me as fugitive as the flying lights from our lamps as they shot into the forest recesses. God forbid that on such a theme I should seem to affect sentimentalism. It is from overmastering recollections that I look back on those distant days; and chiefly I have suffered myself to give way before the impulse that haunts me, of reverting to those bitter, bitter thoughts, in order to notice one singular waywardness or caprice (as it might seem) incident to the situation, which, I doubt not, besieges many more people than myself: it is, that I find a more poignant suffering, a pang more searching, in going back, not to those enjoyments themselves, and the days when they were within my power, but to times anterior, when as yet they did not exist; nay, when some who were chiefly concerned in them as parties, had not even been born. No night, I might almost say, of my whole life, remains so profoundly, painfully, and pathetically imprinted on my remembrance, as this very one, on which I tried, prelusively, as it were, that same road in solitude, and lulled by the sweet carolings of the postillion, which, *after* an interval of ten years, and *through* a period of more than equal duration, it was destined that I should so often traverse in circumstances of happiness too radiant, that for me are burned out for ever. Coleridge told me of a similar case that had fallen within his knowledge, and the impassioned expression which the feelings belonging to it drew from a servant woman at Keswick:—She had nursed some boy, either of his or of Mr. Southey's; the boy had lived apart from the rest of the family, secluded with his nurse in her cottage; she was doatingly fond of him; lived, in short, *by* him as well as *for* him; and nearly ten years of her life had been exalted into one golden dream by his companionship. At length came the day which severed the connection; and she, in the anguish of the separation, bewailing her future loneliness, and

knowing too well that education and the world, if it left him some kind remembrances of her, never could restore him to her arms the same fond loving boy that felt no shame in surrendering his whole heart to caressing and being caressed, did not revert to any day or season of her ten years' happiness, but went back to the very day of his arrival, a particular Thursday, and to an hour when, as yet, she had not seen him, exclaiming—'O that Thursday! O that it could come back! that Thursday when the chaise-wheels were ringing in the streets of Keswick; when yet I had not seen his bonny face; but when *he* was coming!'

Ay, reader, all this may sound foolishness to you, that perhaps never had a heartach, or that may have all your blessings to come. But now let me return to my narrative:—After about twelve months' interval, and therefore again in November, but November of the year 1808, I repeated my visit to Wordsworth, and upon a longer scale. I found him removed from his cottage to a house of considerable size, about three-quarters of a mile distant, called Allan Bank. This house had been very recently erected, at an expense of about £1500, by a gentleman from Liverpool, a merchant, and also a lawyer in some department or other. It was not yet completely finished; and an odd accident was reported to me as having befallen it in its earliest stage. The walls had been finished, and this event was to be celebrated at the village inn with an *ovation*, previously to the *triumph* that would follow on the roof-raising. The workmen had all housed themselves at the *Red Lion*, and were beginning their carouse, when up rode a traveller, who brought them the unseasonable news, that, whilst riding along the vale, he had beheld the downfall of the whole building. Out the men rushed, hoping that this might be a hoax; but too surely they found his report true, and their own festival premature. A little malice mingled unavoidably with the laughter of the Dalesmen; for it happened that the Liverpool gentleman had offered a sort of insult to the native arists, by bringing down both masons and carpenters from his own town: an unwise plan, for they were necessarily unacquainted with many points of local skill; and it was to some ignorance in their mode of laying the stones that the accident was due. The house had one or two capital defects—it was cold, damp, and, to all appearance, incurably smoky. Upon this latter defect, by the way, Wordsworth founded a claim, not for diminution of rent, but absolutely

for entire immunity from any rent at all. It was truly comical to hear him argue the point with the Liverpool proprietor, Mr. C.* He went on dilating on the hardship of living in such a house; of the injury, or suffering at least, sustained by the eyes; until, at last, he had drawn a picture of himself as a very ill-used man; and I seriously expected to hear him sum up by demanding a round sum for damages. Mr. C. was a very good-natured man, calm, and gentlemanlike in his manners. He had also a considerable respect for Wordsworth, derived, it may be supposed, not from his writings, but from the authority (which many more besides him could not resist) of his conversation. However, he looked grave and perplexed. Nor do I know how the matter ended; but I mention it as an illustration of Wordsworth's keen spirit of business. Whilst foolish people supposed him a mere honeyed sentimentalist, speaking only in zephyrs and bucolics, he was in fact a somewhat hard pursuer of what he thought fair advantages.

In the February which followed, I left Allan Bank; but, upon Miss Wordsworth's happening to volunteer the task of furnishing for my use the cottage so recently occupied by her brother's family, I took it upon a seven years' lease. And thus it happened—this I mean was the mode of it, (for, at any rate, I should have settled somewhere in the country,) that I became a resident in Grasmere.

* Mr Crump

WESTMORELAND AND THE DALESMEN *

IN February, as I have said, of 1809, I quitted Allan Bank; and, from that time until the depth of summer, Miss Wordsworth was employed in the task she had volunteered, of renewing and furnishing the little cottage in which I was to succeed the illustrious tenant who had, in my mind, hallowed the rooms by a seven years' occupation, during, perhaps, the happiest period of his life—the early years of his marriage, and of his first acquaintance with parental affections. Cottage, immortal in my remembrance! as well it might be; for this cottage I retained through just seven-and-twenty years: this was the scene of struggle the most tempestuous and bitter within my own mind: this the scene of my despondency and unhappiness: this the scene of my happiness—a happiness which justified the faith of man's *earthly* lot, as, upon the whole, a dowry from heaven. It was, in its exterior, not so much a picturesque cottage—for its outline and proportions, its windows and its chimneys, were not sufficiently marked and effective for the picturesque¹—as it was lovely: one

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for January 1840.

¹ The idea of the picturesque is one which did not exist at all until the post-Christian ages; neither amongst the Grecians nor amongst the Romans; and *therefore*, as respects one reason, it was, that the art of landscape painting did not exist (except in a Chinese infancy, and as a mere trick of inventive ingenuity) amongst the finest artists of Greece. What *is* picturesque, as placed in relation to the beautiful and the sublime? It is (to define it by the very shortest form of words) the characteristic, pushed into a sensible excess. The prevailing character of any natural object, no matter how little attractive it may be for beauty, is always interesting for itself, as the character and hieroglyphic symbol of the purposes pursued by Nature in the determination of its form, style of motion, texture of superficies, relation of parts, etc.

Thus, for example, an expression of dulness and somnolent torpor does not ally itself with grace or elegance; but, in combination with strength and other qualities, it may compose a character of serviceable and patient endurance, as in the cart-horse, having unity in itself, and tending to one class of uses sufficient to mark it out by circumscription for a distinct and separate contemplation. Now, in combination with certain counteracting circumstances, as with the momentary energy of some great effort, much of

gable end was, indeed, most gorgeously appalled in ivy, and so far picturesque; but the principal side, or what might be called front, as it presented itself to the road, and was most illuminated by windows, was embossed—nay, it might be said, smothered—in roses of different species, amongst which the moss and the damask prevailed. These, together with as much jessamine and honeysuckle as could find room to flourish, were not only in themselves a most interesting garniture for a humble cottage wall, but they also performed the acceptable service of breaking the unpleasant glare that would else have wounded the eye, from the whitewash; a glare which, having been renewed amongst the general preparations against my coming to inhabit the house, could not be sufficiently subdued in tone for the artist's eye until the storm of several winters had weather-stained and tamed down its brilliancy. The Westmoreland cottages, as a class, have long been celebrated for their picturesque forms, and very justly so: in no part of the world are cottages to be found more strikingly interesting to the eye by their general outlines, by the sheltered porches of their entrances, by their exquisite chimneys, by their rustic windows, and by the distribution of the parts. These parts are on a larger scale, both as to number and size, than a stranger would expect to find as dependencies and out-houses attached to dwelling-houses so modest; chiefly from the necessity of making provision, both in fuel for themselves, and in hay, straw, and brackens for the cattle against the long winter. But, in praising

this peculiar character might be lost, or defeated, or dissipated. On that account, the skilful observer will seek out circumstances that are in harmony with the principal tendencies and assist them; such, suppose, as the state of lazy relaxation from labour, and the fall of heavy drenching rain causing the head to droop, and the shaggy mane, together with the fetlocks, to weep. These, and other circumstances of attitude, etc., bring out the character or prevailing tendency of the animal in some excess; and, in such a case, we call the resulting effect to the eye—picturesque: or, in fact, *characteresque*. In extending this speculation to objects of art and human purposes, there is something more required of subtle investigation. Meantime, it is evident that neither the sublime nor the beautiful depends upon any *secondary* interest of a purpose or of a character expressing that purpose. They (confining the case to visual objects) court the *primary* interest involved in that (form, colour, texture, attitude, motion,) which forces admiration, which fascinates the eye, for itself, and without a question of any distinct purpose; and, instead of character—that is, discriminating and separating expression, tending to the special and the individual—they both agree in pursuing the Catholic—the Normal—the Ideal. [Q.]

the Westmoreland dwellings, it must be understood that only those of the native Dalesmen are contemplated; for as to those raised by the alien intruders—‘the lakers,’ or ‘foreigners’ as they are sometimes called by the old indigenous possessors of the soil—these being designed to exhibit ‘a taste’ and an eye for the picturesque, are pretty often mere models of deformity, as vulgar and as silly as it is well possible for any object to be, in a case where, after all, the workman, and obedience to custom, and the necessities of the ground, etc., will often step in to compel the architects into common sense and propriety. The main defect in Scottish scenery, the eyesore that disfigures so many charming combinations of landscape, is the offensive style of the rural architecture; but still, even where it is worst, the *mode* of its offence is not by affectation and conceit, and preposterous attempts at realizing sublime, Gothic, or castellated effects in little gingerbread ornaments, and ‘tobacco pipes,’ and make-believe parapets, and towers like kitchen or hot-house flues; but in the hard undisguised pursuit of mere coarse uses and needs of life. Too often, the rustic mansion, that should speak of decent poverty and seclusion, peaceful and comfortable, wears the most repulsive air of town confinement and squalid indigence; the house being built of substantial stone, three stories high, or even four, the roof of massy slate; and everything strong which respects the future outlay of the proprietor—everything frail which respects the comfort of the inhabitants: windows broken and stuffed up with rags or old hats; steps and door encrusted with dirt; and the whole tarnished with smoke. Poverty—how different the face it wears looking with meagre staring eyes from such a city dwelling as this, and when it peeps out, with rosy cheeks, from amongst clustering roses and woodbines, at a little lattice, from a little one-story cottage! Are, then, the main characteristics of the Westmoreland dwelling-houses imputable to superior taste? By no means. Spite of all that I have heard Mr. Wordsworth and others say in maintaining that opinion, I, for my part, do and must hold—that the Dalesmen produce none of the happy effects which frequently arise in their domestic architecture under any search after beautiful forms—a search which they despise with a sort of Vandal dignity; no, nor with any sense or consciousness of their success. How then? Is it accident—mere casual good luck—that has brought forth, for instance, so many exquisite forms of

chimneys? Not so; but it is this—it is good sense, on the one hand, bending and conforming to the dictates or even the suggestions of the climate, and the local circumstances of rocks, water, currents of air, etc.; and, on the other hand, wealth sufficient to arm the builder with all suitable means for giving effects to his purpose, and to evade the necessity of make-shifts. But the radical ground of the interest attached to Westmoreland cottage architecture, lies in its submission to the determining agencies of the surrounding circumstances—such of them, I mean, as are permanent, and have been gathered from long experience. The porch, for instance, which does so much to take away from a house the character of a rude box, pierced with holes for air, light, and ingress, has evidently been dictated by the sudden rushes of wind through the mountain ‘ghylls,’ which make some kind of protection necessary to the ordinary door; and this reason has been strengthened in cases of houses near to a road, by the hospitable wish to provide a sheltered seat for the wayfarer—most of these porches being furnished with one in each of the two recesses, to the right and to the left. The long winter again, as I have already said, and the artificial prolongation of the winter, by the necessity of keeping the sheep long upon the low grounds, creates a call for large out-houses; and these, for the sake of warmth, are usually placed at right angles to the house; which has the effect of making a much larger system of parts than would else arise. But perhaps the main feature, which gives character to the pile of building, is the roof, and, above all, the chimneys. It is the remark of an accomplished Edinburgh artist, H. W. Williams, in the course of his strictures¹ upon the domestic architecture of the Italians, and especially of the Florentines, that the character of buildings, in certain circumstances, ‘depends wholly or chiefly on the form of the roof and the chimney. This,’ he goes on, ‘is particularly the case in Italy, where more variety and taste is displayed in the chimneys than in the buildings to which they belong. These chimneys are as peculiar and characteristic as palm trees in a tropical climate.’ Again, in speaking of Calabria and the Ionian Islands, he says—‘We were forcibly struck with the consequence which the beauty of the chimneys imparted to the character of the whole building.’ Now, in Great Britain, he complains, with

¹ ‘Travels in Italy, Greece, and the Ionian Islands,’ vol. i. pp. 74–5. [Q.]

reason, of the very opposite result; not the plain building ennobled by the chimney; but the chimney degrading the noble building; and in Edinburgh, especially, where the homely and inelegant appearance of the chimneys contrasts most disadvantageously and offensively with the beauty of the buildings which they surmount. Even here, however, he makes an exception for some of the *old* buildings, 'whose chimneys,' he admits, 'are very tastefully decorated, and contribute essentially to the beauty of the general effect.' It is probable, therefore, and many houses of the Elizabethan era confirm it, that a better taste prevailed, in this point, amongst our ancestors, both Scottish and English; that this elder fashion travelled, together with many other usages, from the richer parts of Scotland to the Borders, and thence to the vales of Westmoreland; where they have continued to prevail, from their affectionate adhesion to all patriarchal customs. Some, undoubtedly, of these Westmoreland forms have been dictated by the necessities of the weather, and the systematic energies of human skill, from age to age, applied to the very difficult task of training smoke into obedience, under the peculiar difficulties presented by the sites of Westmoreland houses. These are chosen, generally speaking, with the same good sense and regard to domestic comfort, as the primary consideration (without, however, disdainfully slighting the sentiment, whatever it were, of peace, of seclusion, of gaiety, of solemnity, the special '*religio loci*') which seems to have guided the choice of those who founded religious houses. And here, again, by the way, appears a marked difference between the Dalesmen and the intrusive gentry not creditable to the latter. The native Dalesman, well aware of the fury with which the wind often gathers and eddies about any eminence, however trifling its elevation, never thinks of planting his house *there*: whereas the stranger, singly solicitous about the prospect or the range of lake which his gilt saloons are to command, chooses his site too often upon points better fitted for a temple of Eolus than a human dwelling-place; and he belts his house with balconies and verandas that a mountain gale often tears away in mockery. The Dalesman, wherever his choice is not circumscribed, selects a sheltered spot (a *wray*,¹ for instance,) which protects him from the wind altogether, upon one or two

¹ *Wraie* is the old Danish, or Icelandic word for *angle*. Hence the many 'wrays' in the lake district. [Q.]

quarters, and on all quarters from its tornado violence: he takes good care, at the same time, to be within a few feet of a mountain beck: a caution so little heeded by some of the villa founders, that absolutely, in a country surcharged with water, they have sometimes found themselves driven, by sheer necessity, to the after-thought of sinking a well. The very best situation, however, in other respects, may be bad in one; and sometimes find its very advantages, and the beetling crags which protect its rear, obstructions the most permanent to the ascent of smoke; and it is in the contest with these natural baffling repellents of the smoke, and in the variety of artifices for modifying its vertical, or for accomplishing its lateral escape, that have arisen the large and graceful variety of chimney models. My cottage, wanting this primary feature of elegance in the constituents of Westmoreland cottage architecture, and wanting also another very interesting feature of the elder architecture, annually becoming more and more rare, viz. the outside gallery (which is sometimes merely of wood, but is much more striking when provided for in the original construction of the house, and completely *enfoncé* in the masonry,) could not rank high amongst the picturesque houses of the country: those, at least, which are such by virtue of their architectural form. It was, however, very irregular in its outline to the rear, by the aid of one little projecting room, and also of a stable and little barn, in immediate contact with the dwelling-house. It had, besides, the great advantage of a varying height: two sides being about fifteen or sixteen feet high from the exposure of both stories; whereas the other two being swathed about by a little orchard that rose rapidly and unequally towards the vast mountain range in the rear, exposed only the upper story; and, consequently, on those sides the elevation rarely rose beyond seven or eight feet. All these accidents of irregular form and outline, gave to the house some little pretensions to a picturesque character; whilst its 'separable accidents' (as the logicians say)—its bowery roses and jessamine clothed it in loveliness—its associations with Wordsworth—crowned it, to my mind, with historical dignity; and, finally, my own twenty-seven years' off-and-on connection with it, have, by ties personal and indestructible, endeared it to my heart so unspeakably beyond all other houses, that even now I rarely dream through four nights running, that I do not find myself (and others besides) in some

one of those rooms; and, most probably, the last cloudy delirium of approaching death will re-install me in some chamber of that same humble cottage. 'What a tale,' says Foster, the eloquent essayist—'what a tale could be told by many a room, were the walls endowed with memory and speech!' or, in the more impassioned expressions of Wordsworth—

'Ah! what a lesson to a thoughtless man
————— if any gladsome field of earth
Could render back the sighs to which it hath responded,
Or echo the sad steps by which it hath been trod!'

And equally affecting it would be, if such a field or such a house could render up the echoes of joy, of festal music, of jubilant laughter—the innocent mirth of infants, or the gaiety, not less innocent, of youthful mothers—equally affecting would be such a reverberation of forgotten household happiness, with the re-echoing records of sighs and groans. And few indeed are the houses that, within a period no longer than from the beginning of the century to 1835 (so long was it either mine or Wordsworth's,) have crowded such ample materials for those echoes, whether sorrowful or joyous.

SOCIETY OF THE LAKES

I

[MRS MILLAR AND MISS CULLEN] *

My cottage was ready in the summer; but I was playing truant amongst the valleys of Somersetshire,† and, meantime, different families, throughout the summer, borrowed the cottage of the Wordsworths as my friends: they consisted chiefly of ladies; and some, by the delicacy of their attentions to the flowers, etc., gave me reason to consider their visit during my absence as a real honour; others—such is the difference of people in this world—left the rudest memorials of their careless habits impressed upon house, furniture, garden, etc. In November, at last, I—the long-expected—made my appearance; some little sensation did really and naturally attend my coming, for most of the draperies belonging to beds, curtains, etc., had been sewed by the young women of that or the adjoining vales. This had caused me to be talked of. Many had seen me on my visit to the Wordsworths. Miss Wordsworth had introduced the curious to a knowledge of my age, name, prospects, and all the rest of what can be interesting to know. Even the old people of the vale were a little excited by the accounts (somewhat exaggerated, perhaps) of the never ending books that continued to arrive in packing-cases for several months in succession. Nothing in these vales so much fixes the attention and respect of the people as the reputation of being a ‘far learn’d’ man. So far, therefore, I had already bespoke the favourable opinion of the Dalesmen. And a separate kind of interest arose amongst mothers and daughters, in the knowledge that I should necessarily want what—in a sense somewhat different from the general one—is called a ‘housekeeper’; that is, not an upper servant to superintend others, but one who could undertake, in her own person, all the duties of the house. It is not discreditable to these worthy people that several of the richest and

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for January 1840, where it immediately follows ‘Westmoreland and the Dalesmen’.

† De Quincey had been visiting his mother at Wrington in Somerset.

most respectable families were anxious to secure the place for a daughter. Had I been a dissipated young man, I have good reason to know there would have been no canvassing at all for the situation. But partly my books spoke for the character of my pursuits with these simple-minded people—partly the introduction of the Wordsworths guaranteed the safety of such a service. Even then, had I persisted in my original intention of bringing a man-servant, no respectable young woman would have accepted the place. As it was, and it being understood that I had renounced this intention, many, in a gentle diffident way, applied for the place, or their parents on their behalf. And I mention the fact, because it illustrates one feature in the manners of this primitive and peculiar people, the Dalesmen of Westmoreland. However wealthy, they do not think it degrading to permit even the eldest daughter to go out for a few years to service. The object is not to gain a sum of money in wages, but that sort of household experience which is supposed to be unattainable upon a suitable scale out of a gentleman's family. So far was this carried, that, amongst the offers made to myself, was one from a young woman whose family was amongst the very oldest in the country, and who was at that time under an engagement of marriage to the very richest young man in the vale. She and her future husband had a reasonable prospect of possessing ten thousand pounds in land; and yet neither her own family nor her husband's objected to her seeking such a place as I could offer. Her character and manners, I ought to add, were so truly excellent, and won respect so inevitably from everybody, that nobody could wonder at the honourable confidence reposed in her by her manly and spirited young lover. The issue of the matter, as respected my service, was, why I do not know, that Miss Wordsworth did not accept of her; and she fulfilled her purpose in another family, a very grave and respectable one, in Kendal. She stayed about a couple of years, returned, and married the young man to whom she had engaged herself, and is now the prosperous mother of a fine handsome family; and she, together with her mother-in-law, are the two leading matrons of the vale.

It was on a November night, about ten o'clock, that I first found myself installed in a house of my own—this cottage, so memorable from its past tenant to all men, so memorable to myself from all which has since passed in connection with it. A

writer in 'The Quarterly Review,' in noticing the autobiography of Dr. Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, has thought fit to say that the lakes, of course, afforded no society capable of appreciating this commonplace, coarse-minded man of talents. The person who said this I understand to have been Dr. Whittaker, the respectable antiquary. Now, that the reader may judge of the propriety with which this was asserted, I shall slightly rehearse the muster-roll of our lake society, as it existed at the time when I seated myself in my Grasmere cottage. I will undertake to say, that the meanest person in the whole scattered community was more extensively accomplished than the good bishop, was more conscientiously true to his duties, and had more varied powers of conversation. Wordsworth and Coleridge, then living at Allan Bank, in Grasmere, I will not notice in such a question. Southey, living thirteen miles off, at Keswick, I have already noticed; and he needs no *proneur*. I will begin with Windermere. At Clappersgate, a little hamlet of perhaps six houses, on its north-west angle, and about five miles from my cottage, resided two Scottish ladies, daughters of Dr. Cullen, the famous physician and nosologist. They were universally beloved for their truly kind dispositions, and the firm independence of their conduct. They had been reduced from great affluence to a condition of rigorous poverty. Their father had made what should have been a fortune by his practice. The good doctor, however, was careless of his money in proportion to the facility with which he made it. All was put into a box, open to the whole family. Breach of confidence, in the most thoughtless use of this money, there could be none; because no restraint in that point, beyond what honour and good sense imposed, was laid upon any of the elder children. Under such regulations, it may be imagined that Dr. Cullen would not accumulate any very large capital; and, at his death, the family, for the first time, found themselves in embarrassed circumstances. Of the two daughters who belonged to our lake population, one had married a Mr. Millar, son to the celebrated Professor Millar of Glasgow. This gentleman had died in America; and Mrs. Millar was now a childless widow. The other still remained unmarried. Both were equally independent; and independent even with regard to their nearest relatives; for, even from their brother—who had risen to rank and affluence as a Scottish judge, under the title of Lord Cullen—they declined to receive assistance; and

except for some small addition made to their income by a novel called 'Home,' (in as many as seven volumes, I really believe,) by Miss Cullen, their expenditure was rigorously shaped to meet that very slender income, which they drew from *their* shares of the patrimonial wrecks. More honourable and modest independence, or poverty more gracefully supported, I have rarely known. Meantime, these ladies, though literary and very agreeable in conversation, could not be classed with what now began to be known as the *lake* community of literati; for they took no interest in any one of the lake poets; did not affect to take any; and I am sure they were not aware of so much value in any one thing these poets had written, as could make it worth while even to look into their books; and accordingly, as well-bred women, they took the same course as was pursued for several years by Mrs. Hannah More, viz. cautiously to avoid mentioning their names in my presence. This was natural enough in women who had probably built their early admiration upon French models, (for Mrs. Millar used to tell me that she regarded the 'Mahomet' of Voltaire as the most perfect of human compositions,) and still more so at a period when almost all the world had surrendered their opinions and their literary consciences (so to speak) into the keeping of 'The Edinburgh Review;' in whose favour, besides, those ladies had the pardonable prepossessions of national pride, as a collateral guarantee of that implicit faith which, in those days, stronger-minded people than they took a pride in professing. Still, in defiance of prejudices mustering so strongly to support their blindness, and the still stronger support which this blindness drew from their total ignorance of everything either done or attempted by the lake poets, these amiable women persisted in one uniform tone of courteous forbearance, as often as any question arose to implicate the names either of Wordsworth or Coleridge; any question about them, their books, their families, or anything that was theirs. They thought it strange, indeed, (for so much I heard by a circuitous course,) that promising and intellectual young men—men educated at great universities, such as Mr. Wilson of Elleray, or myself, or a few others who had paid us visits,—should possess so deep a veneration for these writers; but evidently this was an infatuation—a craze, originating, perhaps, in personal connections; and, as the craze of valued friends, to be treated with tenderness. For us therefore—for our sakes—they

took a religious care to suppress all allusion to these disreputable names; and it is pretty plain how sincere their indifference must have been with regard to these neighbouring authors, from the evidence of one fact, viz. that when, in 1810, Mr. Coleridge began to issue, in weekly numbers, his 'Friend,' which, by the prospectus, held forth a promise of meeting all possible tastes—literary, philosophic, political—even this comprehensive field of interest, combined with the adventitious attraction (so very unusual, and so little to have been looked for in that thinly-peopled region) of a local origin, from the bosom of those very hills at the foot of which (though on a different side) they were themselves living, failed altogether to stimulate their torpid curiosity; so perfect was their persuasion beforehand, that no good thing could by possibility come out of a community that had fallen under the ban of the Edinburgh critics. At the same time, it is melancholy to confess that, partly from the dejection of Coleridge; his constant immersion in opium at that period; his hatred of the duties he had assumed, or at least of their too frequent and periodical recurrence; and partly also from the bad selection of topics for a miscellaneous audience; from the heaviness and obscurity with which they were treated; and from the total want of variety, in consequence of defective arrangements on his part for ensuring the co-operation of his friends; no conceivable act of authorship that Coleridge *could* have perpetrated, no possible overt act of dullness and somnolent darkness that he *could* have authorized, was so well fitted to sustain the impression, with regard to him and his friends, that had pre-occupied these ladies' minds. *Habes confitentem reum!* I am sure they would exclaim; not perhaps confessing to that form of delinquency which they had been taught to expect—trivial or extravagant sentimentalism; *Germanity* alternating with tumid inanity; not this, but something quite as bad or worse, viz. palpable dullness—dullness that could be felt and handled—rayless obscurity as to the thoughts—and communicated in language that, according to the Bishop of Llandaff's complaint, was not always English. For, though the particular words cited for blame were certainly known to the vocabulary of metaphysics, and had even been employed by a writer of Queen Anne's reign, (Leibnitz,) who, if any, had the gift of translating dark thoughts into plain ones—still it was intolerable, in point of good sense, that one who had

to win his way into the public ear, should begin by bringing, before a popular and miscellaneous audience, themes that could require such startling and revolting words. 'The Delphic Oracle' was the kindest of the nicknames which the literary taste of Windermere conferred upon the new journal. This was the laughing suggestion of a clever young lady, a daughter of the Bishop of Llandaff, who stood in a neutral position with regard to Coleridge. But others there were, amongst his supposed friends, who felt even more keenly than this young lady the shocking want of adaptation to his audience in the choice of matter; and, even to an audience better qualified to meet such matter, the want of adaptation in the mode of publication, viz. periodically, and by weekly recurrence; a mode of soliciting the public attention which even authorizes the expectation of current topics—topics arising each with its own week or day. One in particular I remember, of these disapproving friends; a Mr. Blair, an accomplished scholar, and a frequent visitor at Elleray, who started the playful scheme of a satirical rejoinder to Coleridge's 'Friend,' under the name of 'The Enemy,' which was to follow always in the wake of its leader, and to stimulate Coleridge, (at the same time that it amused the public,) by attic banter, or by downright opposition, and shewing fight in good earnest. It was a plan that might have done good service to the world, and chiefly through a seasonable irritation (never so much wanted as then) applied to Coleridge's too lethargic state: in fact, throughout life, it is most deeply to be regretted that Coleridge's powers and peculiar learning were never forced out into a large display by intense and almost persecuting opposition. However, this scheme, like thousands of other day-dreams and bubbles that rose upon the breath of morning spirits and buoyant youth, fell to the ground; and, in the meantime, no enemy to 'The Friend' appeared that was capable of matching 'The Friend' when left to itself and its own careless or vagrant guidance. 'The Friend' ploughed heavily along for nine-and-twenty numbers; and our fair recusants and non-conformists in all that regarded the lake poetry or authorship, the two Scottish ladies of Clappersgate, found no reasons for changing their opinions; but continued, for the rest of my acquaintance with them, to practise the same courteous and indulgent silence, whenever the names of Coleridge or Wordsworth happened to be mentioned.

In taking leave of these Scottish ladies, it may be interesting to mention that, previously to their final farewell to our lake society, upon taking up their permanent residence in York, (which step they adopted—partly, I believe, to enjoy the more diversified society which that great city yields, and, at any rate, the more *accessible* society than amongst mountain districts—partly with a view to the cheapness of that rich district in comparison with our sterile soil, poor towns, and poor agriculture,) somewhere about the May or June of 1810, I think—they were able, by a long preparatory course of economy, to invite to the English lakes a family of foreigners—what shall I call them?—a family of Anglo-Gallo-Americans—from the Carolinas. The invitation had been of old standing, and offered, as an expression of gratitude, from these ladies, for many hospitalities and friendly services rendered by the two heads of that family to Mrs. Millar, in former years, and under circumstances of peculiar trial. Mrs. Millar had been hastily summoned from Scotland to attend her husband at Charleston; him, on her arrival, she found dying; and, whilst overwhelmed by this sudden blow, it may be imagined that the young widow would find trials enough for her fortitude, without needing any addition to the load, from friendlessness amongst a nation of strangers, and from total solitude. These evils were spared to Mrs. Millar, through the kind offices and disinterested exertions of an American gentleman (French by birth, but American by adoption,) M. Simond, who took upon himself the cares of superintending Mr. Millar's funeral through all its details; and, by this most seasonable service, secured to the heart-stricken widow that most welcome of privileges in all situations—the privilege of unmolested privacy; for assuredly the heaviest aggravation of such bereavements lies in the necessity, too often imposed by circumstances, upon him or upon her, who may happen to be the sole responsible representative, and, at the same time, the dearest friend of the deceased, of superintending the funeral arrangements. In the very agonies of a new-born grief, whilst the heart is yet raw and bleeding, the mind not yet able to comprehend its loss, the very light of day hateful to the eyes; the necessity, even at such a moment arises, and without a day's delay, of facing strangers, talking with strangers, discussing the most empty details, with a view to the most sordid of considerations—cheapness, convenience, custom, and local prejudice; and,

finally, talking about whom? why, the very child, husband, wife, who has just been torn away; and this, too, under a consciousness that the being so hallowed is, as to these strangers, an object equally indifferent with any one person whatsoever that died a thousand years ago. Fortunate, indeed, is that person who has a natural friend, or, in default of such a friend, who finds a volunteer stepping forward to relieve him from a conflict of feeling so peculiarly unseasonable. Mrs. Millar never forgot the service which had been rendered to her; and she was happy when M. Simond, who had become a wealthy citizen of America, at length held out the prospect of coming to profit by her hospitable attentions, amongst that circle of friends with whom she and her sister had surrounded themselves in so interesting a part of England. M. Simond had been a French emigrant—not, I believe, so far connected with the privileged orders of his country or with any political party as to be absolutely forced out of France by danger or by panic; but he had shared in the feelings of those who were. Revolutionary France, in the anarchy of the transition state, and still heaving to and fro with the subsiding shocks of the great earthquake, did not suit him: there was neither the polish which he sought in its manners, nor the security which he sought in its institutions. England he did not love; but yet, if not England, some country which had grown up from English foundations was the country for him; and, as he augured no rest for France, through some generations to come, but an endless succession of revolution to revolution, anarchy to anarchy, he judged it best that, having expatriated himself and lost one country, he should solemnly adopt another. Accordingly, he became an American citizen. English he already spoke with propriety and fluency. And, finally, he cemented his English connections by marrying an English lady, the niece of John Wilkes. ‘What John Wilkes?’ asked a lady, one of a dinner-party at Calgarth, (the house of Dr. Watson, the celebrated Bishop of Llandaff,) upon the banks of Windermere.—‘*What* John Wilkes!’ re-echoed the Bishop, with a vehement intonation of scorn; ‘*What* John Wilkes, indeed! as if there was ever more than one John Wilkes—*fama super æthera notus!*’—‘O my Lord, I beg your pardon,’ said an old lady, nearly connected with the Bishop, ‘there were two; I knew one of them: he was a little, ill-looking man, and he kept the Blue Boar at——.’—‘At Flamborough Head!’ roared the Bishop, with a savage

expression of disgust. The old lady, suspecting that some screw was loose in the matter, thought it prudent to drop the contest; but she murmured, *sotto voce*, 'No, not at Flamborough Head, but at Market Drayton.' Madame Simond, then, was the niece, not of the ill-looking host of the Blue Boar, but of *the* Wilkes, so memorably connected with the *parvanities* of the English government at one period; with the casuistry of our English constitution, by the questions raised in his person as to the effects of expulsion from the House of Commons, etc., etc.; and, finally, with the history of English jurisprudence, by his intrepidity on the matter of general warrants. M. Simond's party, when at length it arrived, consisted of two persons besides himself, viz. his wife, the niece of Wilkes, and a young lady of eighteen, standing in the relation of grand-niece, to the same memorable person. This young lady, highly pleasing in her person, on quitting the lake district, went northwards, with her party, to Edinburgh, and there became acquainted with Mr. Francis Jeffrey, the present Lord Jeffrey, who, naturally enough, fell in love with her, followed her across the Atlantic—and in Charleston, I believe, received the honour of her hand in marriage. I, as one of Mrs. Millar's friends, put in my claim to entertain her American party in my turn. One long summer's day, they all came over to my cottage in Grasmere; and as it became my duty to do the honours of our vale to the strangers, I thought that I could not discharge the duty in a way more likely to interest them all, than by conducting them through Grasmere into the little inner chamber of Easedale; and there, within sight of the solitary cottage—Blentarn Ghyll—telling them the story of the Greens; because, in this way, I had an opportunity, at the same time, of showing the scenery from some of the best points, and of opening to them a few glimpses of the character and customs which distinguish this section of the English yeomanry from others. The story did certainly interest them all; and thus far I succeeded in my duties as Cicerone and Amphytrion of the day. But throughout the rest of our long morning's ramble, I remember that accident, or, possibly the politeness of M. Simond and his French sympathy with a young man's natural desire to stand well in the eyes of a handsome young woman, so ordered it, that I had constantly the honour of being Miss Wilkes' immediate companion, as the narrowness of the path pretty generally threw us into ranks of two and two. Having, therefore,

through so many hours, the opportunity of an exclusive conversation with this young lady, it would have been my own fault had I failed to carry off an impression of her great good sense, as well as her amiable and spirited character. Certainly I did *mon possible* to entertain her, both on her own account and as the visitor of my Scottish friends. But, in the midst of all my efforts, I had the mortification to feel that I was rowing against the stream; that there was a silent body of prepossession against the whole camp of the lakers, which nothing could unsettle. Miss Wilkes naturally looked up, with some feelings of respect, to M. Simond, who, by his marriage with her aunt, had become her own guardian and protector. Now, M. Simond, of all men in the world, was the last who could have appreciated an English poet. He had, to begin with, a French inaptitude for apprehending poetry at all: any poetry that is, which transcends manners and the interests of social life. Then, unfortunately, not merely through what he had not, but equally through what he had, this cleverish Frenchman was, by whole diameters of the earth, remote from the station at which he could comprehend Wordsworth. He was a thorough knowing man of the world, keen, sharp as a razor, and valuing nothing but the tangible and the ponderable. He had a smattering of mechanics, of physiology, geology, mineralogy, and all other *ologies* whatsoever; he had, besides, at his fingers' ends, a huge body of statistical facts—how many people did live, could live, ought to live, in each particular district of each manufacturing county—how many old women of eighty-three there ought to be to so many little children of one—how many murders ought to be committed in a month by each town of 5,000 souls—and so on *ad infinitum*. And to such a thin shred had his old French politeness been worn down by American attrition, that his thin lips could, with much ado, contrive to disguise his contempt for those who failed to meet him exactly upon his own field, with exactly his own quality of knowledge. Yet, after all, it was but a little *case* of knowledge, that he had packed up neatly for a makeshift; just what corresponds to the little assortment of razors, tooth-brushes, nail-brushes, hair-brushes, corkscrew, gimlet, etc., etc., which one carries in one's trunk, in a red morocco case, to meet the casualties of a journey. The more one was indignant at being the object of such a man's contempt, the more heartily did one disdain his disdain, and recalcitrate his kicks. On the single day which Mrs.

Millar could spare for Grasmere, I had taken care to ask Wordsworth amongst those who were to meet the party. Wordsworth came; but, by instinct, he and Monsieur Simond knew and recoiled from each other. They met, they saw, they *interdespised*. Wordsworth, on his side, seemed so heartily to despise M. Simond, that he did not stir or make an effort to right himself under any misapprehension of the Frenchman, but coolly acquiesced in any and every inference which he might be pleased to draw; whilst M. Simond, double-charged with contempt from 'The Edinburgh Review,' and from the report (I cannot doubt) of his present hostess, manifestly thought Wordsworth too abject almost for the trouble of too openly disdaining him. More than one of us could have done justice on this malefactor, by meeting M. Simond on his own ground, and taking the conceit out of him most thoroughly. I was one of those; for I had the very knowledge, or some of it, that he most paraded. But one of us was lazy; another thought it not *tanti*; and I, for my part, in my own house, could not move upon such a service. And in those days, moreover, when as yet I loved Wordsworth not less than I venerated him, a success that would have made him suffer in any man's opinion by comparison with myself, would have been painful to my feelings. Never did party meet more exquisitely ill-assorted; never did party separate with more exquisite and cordial disgust, in its principal members towards each other. I mention the case at all in order to illustrate the abject condition of worldly opinion in which Wordsworth then lived. Perhaps his ill fame was just then in its meridian; for M. Simond, soon after, published his *English Tour* in two octavo volumes; and, of course, he goes over his residence at the lakes; yet it is a strong fact that, according to my remembrance, he does not vouchsafe to mention such a person as Wordsworth.*

One anecdote, before parting with these ladies, I will mention as received from Miss Cullen on her personal knowledge of the fact. There are stories current which resemble this; but wanting that immediate guarantee for their accuracy which, in this case, I

* De Quincey is wrong. In his *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain during the years 1810 and 1811 by a French Traveller* (Edinburgh, 1815), Louis Simond mentions 'Mr Wordsworth, another of the poets of the lakes', although he has much more to say about 'the celebrated Mr Southey'.

at least was obliged to admit, in the attestation of so perfectly veracious a reporter as this excellent lady. A female friend of her own, a person of family and consideration, being on the eve of undertaking a visit to a remote part of the kingdom, dreamed that, on reaching the end of her journey, and drawing up to the steps of the door, a footman, with a very marked and forbidding expression of countenance, his complexion pale and bloodless, and his manners sullen, presented himself to let down the steps of her carriage. This same man, at a subsequent point of her dream, appeared to be stealing up a private staircase, with some murderous instruments in his hands, towards a bedroom door. This dream was repeated, I think, twice. Some time after, the lady, accompanied by a grown-up daughter, accomplished her journey. Great was the shock which awaited her on reaching her friend's house: a servant corresponding in all points to the shadowy outline of her dream, equally bloodless in complexion, and equally gloomy in manner, appeared at her carriage door. The issue of the story was—that upon a particular night, after a stay of some length, the lady grew unaccountably nervous; resisted her feelings for some time; but at length, at the entreaty of her daughter, who slept in the same room, suffered some communication of the case to be made to a gentleman resident in the house, who had not yet retired to rest. This gentleman, struck by the dream, and still more on recalling to mind some suspicious preparations, as if for a hasty departure, in which he had detected the servant, waited in concealment until three o'clock in the morning—at which time hearing a stealthy step moving up the staircase, he issued with firearms, and met the man at the lady's door, so equipped as to leave no doubt of his intentions; which possibly contemplated only robbing of the lady's jewels, but possibly also murder in a case of extremity. There are other stories with some of the same circumstances; and, in particular, I remember one very like it in Dr. Abercrombie's 'Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers' [1830,] p. 283. But in this version of Dr. Abercrombie's, (supposing it another version of the same story,) the striking circumstance of anticipating the servant's features is omitted; and in no version, except this of Miss Cullen's, have I heard the names mentioned both of the parties to the affair, and also of the place at which it occurred.

SOCIETY OF THE LAKES

II

[CHARLES LLOYD] *

IMMEDIATELY below the little village of Clappersgate, in which the Scottish ladies resided—Mrs. Millar and Mrs. Cullen—runs the wild mountain river called the *Brathay*, which, descending from Langdale Head, and soon after becoming confluent with the Rothay, (a brook-like stream that comes originally from Easedale, and takes its course through the two lakes of Grasmere and Rydal,) finally composes a considerable body of water, that flows along, deep, calm, and steady—no longer brawling, bubbling, tumultuous—into the splendid lake of Windermere, the largest of our English waters, or, if not, at least the longest, and of the most extensive circuit. Close to this little river, Brathay, on the farther side as regards Clappersgate, (and what, though actually part and parcel of a district that is severed by the sea, or by Westmoreland, from Lancashire proper, is yet, from some old legal usage, denominated the Lancashire side of the Brathay,) stands a modest family mansion, called Low Brathay, by way of distinction from another and a larger mansion, about a quarter of a mile beyond it, which, standing upon a little eminence, is called High Brathay.

In this house of Low Brathay lived, and continued to live for many years, (in fact, until misery, in its sharpest form, drove him from his hearth and his household happiness,) Charles L——† the younger;—on his own account, and for his personal qualities, worthy of a separate notice in any biography, howsoever sparing in its digressions; but, viewed in reference to his fortunes, amongst the most interesting men I have known. Never do I reflect upon his hard fate, and the bitter though mysterious persecution of body which pursued him, dogged him, and thickened as life advanced, but I feel gratitude to Heaven for my

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for March 1840.

† Charles Lloyd.

own exemption from suffering in that particular form; and, in the midst of afflictions, of which two or three have been most hard to bear, because not unmingled with pangs of remorse for the share which I myself may have had in causing them—still, by comparison with the lot of Charles L——, I acknowledge my own to have been happy and serene. Already, on my first hasty visit to Grasmere in 1807, I found Charles L—— settled with his family at Brathay, and a resident there, I believe, of some standing. It was on a wet gloomy evening; and Miss Wordsworth and I were returning from an excursion to Esthwaite Water, when, suddenly, in the midst of blinding rain, without previous notice, she said—Pray, let us call for a few minutes at this house. A garden gate led us into a little shrubbery, chiefly composed of lawns beautifully kept, through which ran a gravel road, just wide enough to admit a single carriage. A minute or so saw us housed in a small comfortable drawing-room, but with no signs of living creatures near it; and, from the accident of double doors, all covered with baize, being scattered about the house, the whole mansion seemed the palace of silence, though populous, I understood, with children. In no long time appeared Mr L——; soon followed by his youthful wife, both radiant with kindness; and it may be supposed that we were not suffered to depart for some hours. I call Mrs. L—— youthful; and so I might call her husband; for both were youthful considered as the parents of a numerous family, six or seven children then living—Charles L—— himself not being certainly more than twenty-seven, and his ‘Sophia’ perhaps not twenty-five. On that short visit I saw enough to interest me in both; and two years after, when I became myself a permanent resident in Grasmere, the connection between us became close and intimate. My cottage stood just five miles from Brathay; and there were two mountain roads which shortened the space between us, though not the time nor the toil. But, notwithstanding this distance, often and often, upon the darkest nights, for many years, I used to go over about nine o’clock, or an hour later, and sit with him till one. Mrs. L—— was simply an amiable young woman, of pleasing person, perfectly well principled, and, as wife and mother, not surpassed by anybody I have known in either of those characters. In figure she somewhat resembled the ever memorable and most excellent Mrs. Jordan; she was exactly of the middle height, and having that slight degree

of *embonpoint*, even in youth, which never through life diminishes or increases. Her complexion may be imagined, from the circumstances of her hair being tinged with a slight and not unpleasing shade of red. Finally, in manners, she was remarkably self-possessed, free from all awkward embarrassment, and (to an extent which some people would wonder at in one who had been brought up, I believe, wholly in a great commercial town) perfectly lady-like. So much description is due to one, who, though no authoress, and never making the slightest pretension to talents, was too much connected subsequently with the lakiers to be passed over in a review of their community. Ah! gentle lady! your head, after struggling through many a year with strange calamities, has found rest at length; but not in English ground, or amongst the mountains which you loved: at Versailles it is, and perhaps within a stone's throw of that Mrs. Jordan whom in so many things you resembled, and most of all in the misery which settled upon your latter years. There you lie, and for ever, whose blooming matronly figure rises up to me at this moment from a depth of thirty years! and your children scattered into all lands.

But for Charles L——, he, by his literary works, is so far known to the public, that, on his own account, he merits some separate notice. His poems do not place him in the class of powerful poets; they are loosely conceived—faultily even at times—and not finished in the execution. But they have a real and a mournful merit under one aspect, which might be so presented to the general reader as to win a peculiar interest for many of them, and for some a permanent place in any judicious *thesaurus*—such as we may some day hope to see drawn off, and carefully filtered, from the enormous mass of poetry produced since the awakening era of the French Revolution. This aspect is founded on the relation which they bear to the real events and the unexaggerated afflictions of his own life. The feelings which he attempts to express were not assumed for effect, nor drawn by suggestion from others, and then transplanted into some ideal experience of his own. They do not belong to the mimetic poetry so extensively cultivated, but they were true solitary sighs, wrung from his own meditative heart by excess of suffering, and by the yearning after old scenes and household faces of an impassioned memory, brooding over vanished happiness, and cleaving to those early times when life wore even for *his* eyes the golden light of Paradise.

But he had other and higher accomplishments of intellect than he showed in his verses, as I shall presently explain; and of a nature which make it difficult to bring them adequately within the reader's apprehension. Meantime, I will sketch an outline of poor L——'s history, so far as I can pretend to know it. He was the son, and probably his calamitous life originally dated from his being the son, of Quaker parents. It was said, indeed, by himself as well as others, that the mysterious malady which haunted him, had been derived from an ancestress in the maternal line; and this may have been true; and, for all that, it may also be true that Quaker habits were originally answerable for this legacy of woe. It is sufficiently well known that, in the training of their young people, the Society of Friends make it a point of conscience to apply severe checks to all open manifestations of natural feeling, or of exuberant spirits. Not the passions—they are beyond their control—but the expression of those passions by any natural language; this they lay under the heaviest restraint; and, in many cases, it is possible that such a system of thwarting nature may do no great mischief; just as we see the American Indians, in moulding the plastic skulls of their infants into capricious shapes, do not, after all, much disturb the ordinary course of nature, nor produce the idiots we might have expected. But, then, the reason why such tampering may often terminate in slight results is, because often there is not much to tamper with; the machinery is so slight, and the total range within which it plays is perhaps so narrow, that the difference between its normal action and its widest deviation may, after all, be practically unimportant. For there are many men and women of whom I have already said, borrowing the model of the word from Hartley, that they have not so much passions as *passiuncles*. These, however, are in *one* extreme; and others there are and will be, in every class, and under every disadvantage, who are destined to illustrate the very opposite extreme. Great passions—passions pointing to the paths of love, of ambition, of glory, martial or literary—these in men—and in women, again, these, either in some direct shape, or taking the form of intense sympathy with the same passions as moving amongst contemporary men—*will* gleam out fitfully amongst the placid children of Fox and Penn, not less than amongst us who profess no war with the nobler impulses of our nature. And, perhaps, according to the Grecian doctrine of *antiperistasis*,

strong untameable passions are more likely to arise, even in consequence of the counteraction. Deep passions undoubtedly lie in the blood and constitution of Englishmen; and Quakers,¹ after all, do not, by being such, cease, therefore, to be Englishmen.

It is, I have said, sufficiently well known that the Quakers make it a point of their moral economy to lay the severest restraints upon all ebullitions of feeling. Whatever may be the nature of the feeling, whatever its strength, utter itself by word or by gesture it must not; smoulder it may, but it must not break into a flame. This is known; but it is not equally known that this unnatural restraint, falling into collision with two forces at once, the force of passion and of youth, not uncommonly records its own injurious tendencies, and publishes the rebellious movements of nature, by distinct and anomalous diseases. And, further, I have been assured, upon most excellent authority, that these diseases, strange and elaborate affections of the nervous system, are found *exclusively* amongst the young men and women of the Quaker society; that they are known and understood exclusively amongst physicians who have practised in great towns having a large Quaker population, such as Birmingham; that they assume a new type, and a more inveterate character, in the second or third generation, to whom this fatal inheritance is often transmitted; and, finally, that, if this class of nervous derangements does not increase so much as to attract public attention, it is simply because the community itself—the Quaker body—does not increase, but, on the contrary, is rather on the wane.

From a progenitrix, then, no matter in what generation, C. L—— inherited that awful malady which withered his own happiness, root and branch, gathering strength from year to year. His father was a banker, and, I presume, wealthy, from the ample allowance which he always made to his son Charles. Charles, it is true, had the rights of primogeniture—which, however, in a

¹ In using the term *Quakers*, I hoped it would have been understood, even without any explanation from myself, that I did not mean to use it scornfully or insultingly to that respectable body. But it was the great oversight of their founders, not to have saved them from a nickname, by assuming some formal designation expressive of some capital characteristic. At present one is in this dilemma; either one must use a tedious periphrasis, (e.g. *the young women of the Society of Friends*,) or the ambiguous one of *young female Friends*. [Q.]

commercial family, are not considerable—but, at the same time, though eldest, he was eldest of seventeen or eighteen brothers and sisters; and of these, I believe, that some round dozen or so were living at the time when I first came to know him. He had been educated in the bosom of Quaker society; his own parents, with most of their friends, were Quakers; and, even of his own generation, all the young women continued Quakers. Naturally, therefore, as a boy, he also was obliged to conform to the Quaker ritual. But this ritual presses with great inequality upon the two sexes; in so far, at least, as regards dress. The distinctions of dress which announce the female Quaker are all in her favour. In a nation eminent for personal purity, and where it should seem beforehand impossible for any woman to create a pre-eminence for herself in that respect; so it is, however, that the female Quaker, by her dress, seems even purer than other women, and consecrated to a service of purity; earthly soil or taint, even the sullyng breath of mortality, seems as if kept aloof from her person—forcibly held in repulsion by some protecting sanctity. This transcendent purity, and a nun-like gentleness, self-respect, and sequestration from the world—these are all that *her* peculiarity of dress expresses; and surely this 'all' is quite enough to win every man's favourable feelings towards her, and something even like homage. But, with the male Quaker, how different is the case! *His* dress—originally not remarkable by its shape, but solely by its colour and want of ornament, so peculiar has it become in a lapse of nearly two centuries—seems expressly devised to point him out to ridicule. In some towns, it is true, such as Birmingham and Kendal, the public eye is so familiar with this costume, that in *them* it excites no feeling whatever more than the professional costume of butchers, bakers, grooms, etc. But in towns not commercial—towns of luxury and parade—a Quaker is exposed to most mortifying trials of his self-esteem. It has happened that I have followed a young man of this order for a quarter of a mile, in Bath, or in one of the fashionable streets of London, on a summer evening, when numerous servants were lounging on the steps of the front door, or at the area gates; and I have seen him run the gauntlet of grim smiles from the men, and *heard* him run the gauntlet of that sound—the worst which heaven has in its artillery of scorn against the peace of poor Man—the half-suppressed titter of the women. Laughing outright is bad, but still *that* may be

construed into a determinate insult that studiously avows more contempt than is really felt; but tittering is hell itself; for it seems mere nature, and absolute truth, that extort this expression of contempt in spite of every effort to suppress it.

Some such expression it was that drove Charles L—— into an early apostasy from his sect: early it must have been, for he went at the usual age of eighteen to Cambridge, and there, as a Quaker, he could not have been received. He, indeed, of all men, was the least fitted to contend with the world's scorn, for he had no great fortitude of mind, his vocation was not to martyrdom, and he was cursed with the most exquisite sensibility. This sensibility, indeed, it was, and not so properly any determinate passion, which had been the scourge of his ancestress. There was something that appeared effeminate about it; and which, accordingly, used to provoke the ridicule of Wordsworth, whose character, in all its features, wore a masculine and Roman harshness. But, in fact, when you came to know Charles L——, there was, even in this slight tinge of effeminacy, something which conciliated your pity by the feeling that it impressed you with, of being part of his disease. His sensibility was eminently *Rousseauish*—that is, it was physico-moral; now pointing to appetites that would have mastered him had he been less intellectual, and governed by a less exalted standard of moral perceptions; now pointing to fine ærial speculations, subtle as a gossamer, and apparently calculated to lead him off into abstractions even too remote from flesh and blood.

During the Cambridge vacation, or, it might be, even before he went to Cambridge—and my reason for thinking so is, because both, I believe, belonged to the same town, if it could not be said of them as of Pyramus and Thisbe, that '*contiguas habuere domos*'—he fell desperately in love with Miss Sophia P——n.* Who she was I never heard—that is, what were her connections; but, I presume, that she must have been of an opulent family, because Mrs. P——n, the mother of Mrs. L——, occasionally paid a visit to her daughter at the lakes; and then she brought with her a handsomely-appointed equipage, as to horses and servants. This I have reason to remember, from the fact of herself and her daughter frequently coming over on summer evenings to drink

* Sophia Pemberton, daughter of Samuel Pemberton of Birmingham.

tea with me, and the affront (as I then thought it) which Wordsworth fastened upon me in connection with one of those visits. One evening, * * * * * A pang of wrath gathered at my heart. Yet why? One moment, I felt, indeed, that it was not gentlemanly to interfere with the privileges of any man standing in the situation which I then occupied, of host; but still I should not have regarded it, except from its connection with a case I recollected in a previous year. One fine summer day, we were walking together—Wordsworth, myself, and Southey. Southey had been making earnest inquiries about poor Lloyd, just then in the crisis of some severe illness, and Wordsworth's answer had been partly lost to me. I put a question upon it, when, to my surprise (my wrath internally, but also to my special amusement,) he replied that, in fact, what he had said was a matter of some delicacy, and not quite proper to be communicated except to *near friends of the family*. This to me!—O ye Gods!—to me, who knew, by many a hundred conversations how disagreeable Wordsworth was, both to Charles L—— and to his wife; whilst, on the other hand—not by words only, but by deeds, and by the most delicate acts of confidential favour—I knew that Mr. Wilson (Professor Wilson) and myself had been selected as friends in cases which were not so much as named to Wordsworth. The arrogance of Wordsworth was well illustrated in this case of the L——s.

But to resume L——'s history. Being so desperately in love with Miss P——n, and his parents being rich, why should he not have married her? *Why*, I know not. But some great obstacles arose; and, I presume, on the side of Miss P——n's friends; for, actually, it became necessary to steal her away; and the person in whom L—— confided for this delicate service, was no other than Southey. A better choice he could not have made. Had the lady been Helen of Greece, Southey would not have had a thought but for the honour and interests of his confiding friend.

Having thus, by proxy, run away with his young wife, and married her, L—— brought her to Cambridge. It is a novel thing in Cambridge, though not altogether unprecedented, for a student to live there with a wife. This novelty L—— exhibited to the University for some time; but then, finding the situation not perfectly agreeable to the delicate sensibilities of his young wife, L—— removed, first, I think, to Penrith; and, after some changes,

he settled down at Brathay, from which, so long as he stayed on English ground—that is, for about fifteen or sixteen years—he never moved. When I first crossed his path at the lakes, he was in the zenith of the brief happiness that was granted to him on earth. He stood in the very centre of earthly pleasures; and, that his advantages may be duly estimated, I will describe both himself and his situation.

First, then, as to his person, he was tall and somewhat clumsy—not intellectual so much as benign and conciliatory in his expression of face. His features were not striking, but they expressed great goodness of heart; and latterly wore a deprecatory expression that was peculiarly touching to those who knew its cause. His manners were free from all modes of vulgarity; and, where he acquired his knowledge I know not, (for I never heard him claim any connection with people of rank,) but a knowledge he certainly had of all the conventional usages amongst the higher circles, and of those purely arbitrary customs which mere good sense and native elegance of manner are not, of themselves, sufficient to teach. Some of these he might have learned from the family of the Bishop of Llandaff; for with the ladies of that family he was intimate, especially with the eldest daughter, who was an accomplished student in that very department of literature which L—— himself most cultivated, viz., all that class of works which deal in the analysis of human passions, or attempt to exhibit the development of human character, in relation to sexual attachments, when placed in trying circumstances. L—— corresponded with Miss Watson in French; the letters, on both sides, being full of spirit and originality; the subjects generally drawn from Rousseau's 'Héloïse' or his 'Confessions,' from 'Corinne,' from 'Delphine,' or some other work of Madame de Staël. For such disquisitions L—— had a real and a powerful genius. It was really a delightful luxury to hear him giving free scope to his powers for investigating subtle combinations of character; for distinguishing all the shades and affinities of some presiding qualities, disentangling their intricacies, and balancing, antithetically, one combination of qualities against another. Take, for instance, any well-known character from the drama, and pique L——'s delicate perception of differences by affecting to think it identical with some other character of the same class—instantly, in his anxiety to mark out the features of dissimilitude, he would hurry into an

impromptu analysis of each character separately, with an eloquence, with a keenness of distinction, and a felicity of phrase, which were perfectly admirable. This display of familiarity with life and human nature, in all its masqueradings, was sometimes truly splendid. But two things were remarkable in these displays. One was, that the splendour was quite hidden from himself, and unperceived amidst the effort of mind, and oftentimes severe struggles, in attempting to do himself justice, both as respected the thoughts and the difficult task of clothing them in adequate words; he was as free from vanity, or even from complacency in reviewing what he had effected, as it is possible for a human creature to be. He thought, indeed, slightly of his own powers; and, which was even a stronger barrier against vanity, his displays of this kind were always effective in proportion to his unhappiness; for unhappiness it was, and the restlessness of internal irritation, that chiefly drove him to exertions of his intellect; else, and when free from this sort of excitement, he tended to the quiescent state of a listener; for he thought everybody better than himself. The other point remarkable in these displays was, (and most unfavourable, of course, it proved to his obtaining the reputation they merited,) that he could succeed in them only before confidential friends, those on whom he could rely for harbouring no shade of ridicule towards himself or his theme. Let but one person enter the room of whose sympathy he did not feel secure, and his powers forsook him as suddenly as the buoyancy of a bird that has received a mortal shot in its wing. Accordingly, it is a fact that neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge ever suspected the amount of power which was latent in L——; for he firmly believed that both of them despised him. Mrs. L—— thought the same thing. Often and often she has said to me, smiling in a mournful way—‘I know too well that both Wordsworth and Coleridge entertain a profound contempt for my poor Charles.’ And, when I combated this notion, declaring that, although they might (and probably did) hold very cheap such writers as Rousseau and Madame de Staël, and, consequently, could not approve of studies directed so exclusively to their works, or to works of the same class, still that was not sufficient to warrant them in undervaluing the powers which Mr. L—— applied to such studies. To this, or similar arguments, she would reply by simply shaking her head, and then sink into silence.

But the time was fast approaching when all pains of this kind, from supercilious or well-founded disparagement, were to be swallowed up in more awful considerations and fears. The transition was not a long one, from the state of prosperity in which I found L—— about 1807–10, to the utter overthrow of his happiness, and, for his friends, the overthrow of all hopes on his behalf. In the three years I have assigned, his situation seemed luxuriously happy, as regarded the external elements of happiness. He had, without effort of his own, an income, most punctually remitted from his father, of from £1500 to £1800 per annum. This income was entirely resigned to the management of his prudent and excellent wife; and, as his own personal expenses, separate from those of his family, were absolutely none at all, except for books, she applied the whole either to the education of her children, or to the accumulation of all such elegances of life about their easy unpretending mansion, as might soothe her husband's nervous irritations, or might cheer his drooping spirits, with as much variety of pleasure as a mountainous seclusion allowed. The establishment of servants was usually limited to six—one only being a man-servant—but these were well chosen: and one or two were confidential servants, tried by long experience. Rents are always low in the country for unfurnished houses; and even for the country, Low Brathay was a cheap house; but it contained everything for comfort, nothing at all for splendour. Consequently, a very large part of their income was disposable for purposes of hospitality; and, when I first knew them, Low Brathay was distinguished above every other house at the head of Windermere, or within ten miles of that neighbourhood, by the judicious assortment of its dinner parties, and the gaiety of its *soirées dansantes*. These parties were never crowded; poor L—— rarely danced himself; but it gladdened his benevolent heart to see the young and blooming floating through the mazes of the dances then fashionable, whilst he sat by looking on, at times, with pleasure from his sympathy with the pleasure of others; at times pursuing some animated discussion with a literary friend; at times lapsing into profound reverie. At some of these dances it was that I first saw Wilson of Elleray, (Professor Wilson,) in circumstances of animation, and buoyant with youthful spirits, under the excitement of lights, wine, and, above all, of female company. He, by the way, was the best male dancer (not

professional) I have ever seen; and this advantage he owed entirely to the extraordinary strength of his foot in all its parts, to its peculiarly happy conformation, and to the accuracy of his ear; for, as to instruction, I have often understood from his family that he never had any. Here also danced the future wife of Professor Wilson, Miss Jane P——,* at that time the leading belle of the Lake country. But, perhaps, the most interesting person in these parties, from the peculiarity of her situation, was Mrs. L—— herself, still young, and, indeed, not apparently exceeding in years most of her unmarried visitors: still dancing and moving through cotillons, or country dances, as elegantly and as lightly as the youngest of the company; still framing her countenance to that expression of cheerfulness which hospitality required; but stealing for ever troubled glances to the sofa, or the recess, where her husband had reclined himself—dark foreboding looks, that saw but too truly the coming darkness which was soon to swallow up every vestige of this festal pleasure. She looked upon herself and her children too clearly as a doomed household; and such, in some sense, they were. And, doubtless, to poor L—— himself, it must a thousandfold have aggravated his sufferings—that he could trace, with a steady eye, the continual growth of that hideous malady which was stealing over the else untroubled azure of his life, and with inaudible foot was hastening onwards for ever to that night in which no man can work, and in which no man can hope.

It was so painful to Charles L——, naturally, to talk much about his bodily sufferings, and it would evidently have been so unfeeling in one who had no medical counsels to offer, if, for the mere gratification of his curiosity, he had asked for any circumstantial account of its nature or symptoms, that I am at this moment almost as much at a loss to understand what was the mode of suffering which it produced, how it operated, and through what organs, as any of my readers can be. All that I know is this:—For several years—six or seven, suppose—the disease expressed itself by intense anguish of irritation; not an irritation that gnawed at any one local spot, but diffused itself; sometimes causing a determination of blood to the head, then shaping itself in a general sense of plethoric congestion in the

* Jane Penny, daughter of a Liverpool merchant.

blood-vessels, then again remoulding itself into a restlessness that became insupportable; preying upon the spirits and the fortitude, and finding no permanent relief or periodic interval of rest, night or day. Sometimes L—— used robust exercise, riding on horseback as fast as he could urge the horse forward; sometimes, for many weeks together, he walked for twenty miles, or even more, at a time; sometimes (this was in the earlier stages of the case) he took large doses of ether; sometimes he used opium, and, I believe, in very large quantities; and I understood him to say that, for a time, it subdued the excess of irritability, and the agonizing accumulation of spasmodic strength which he felt for ever growing upon him, and, as it were, upon the very surface of his whole body. But all remedies availed him nothing; and once he said to me, when we were out upon the hills—‘Ay, that landscape below, with its quiet cottage, looks lovely, I dare say, to you; as for me, I see it, but I feel it not at all; for, if I begin to think of the happiness, and its various modes which, no doubt, belong to the various occupants, according to their ages and hopes, then I *could* begin to feel it; but it would be a painful effort to me; and the worst of all would be, when I *had* felt it; for that would so sharpen the prospect before me, that just such happiness, which naturally ought to be mine, is soon on the point of slipping away from me for ever.’ Afterwards he told me that his situation internally was always this—it seemed to him as if on some distant road he heard a dull trampling sound, and that he knew it, by a misgiving, to be the sound of some man, or party of men, continually advancing slowly, continually threatening, or continually accusing him: that all the various artifices which he practised for cheating himself into comfort, or beguiling his sad forebodings, were, in fact, but like so many furious attempts, by drum and trumpets, or even by artillery, to drown the distant noise of his enemies; that, every now and then, mere curiosity, or rather breathless anxiety, caused him to hush the artificial din, and to put himself into the attitude of listening again; when, again and again, and so he was sure it would still be, he caught the sullen and accursed sound, trampling and voices of men, or whatever it were, still steadily advancing, though still, perhaps, at a great distance. It was too evident that derangement of the intellect, in some shape, was coming on; because slight and transient fits of aberration from his perfect mind, had already, at intervals,

overtaken him; flying showers, from the skirts of the clouds, that precede and announce the main storm. This was the anguish of his situation, that, for years, he saw before him what was on the road to overwhelm his faculties and his happiness. Still his fortitude did not wholly forsake him, and, in fact, proved to be far greater than I or others had given him credit for possessing. Once only he burst suddenly into tears on hearing the innocent voices of his own children laughing, and of one especially who was a favourite; and he told me that sometimes, when this little child took his hand and led him passively about the garden, he had a feeling that prompted him (however weak and foolish it seemed) to call upon this child for protection; and that it seemed to him as if he might escape, could he but surround himself only with children. No doubt, this feeling arose out of his sense that a confusion was stealing over his thoughts, and that men would soon find this out to be madness, and would deal with him accordingly; whereas children, as long as he did them no harm would see no reason for shutting him up from his own fireside, and from the human face divine.

It would be too painful to pursue the unhappy case through all its stages. For a long time, the derangement of poor L——'s mind was but partial and fluctuating; and it was the opinion of Professor Wilson, from what he had observed, that it was possible to recall him to himself by firmly opposing his delusions. He certainly, on his own part, did whatever he could to wean his thoughts from gloomy contemplation, by preoccupying them with cheerful studies, and such as might call out his faculties. He translated the whole of Alfieri's dramas, and published his translation. He wrote and printed (but did not publish) a novel in two volumes; my copy of which he soon after begged back again so beseechingly, that I yielded; and so, I believe, did all his other friends: in which case no copy may now exist. All, however, availed him not; the crisis so long dreaded arrived. He was taken away to a lunatic asylum; and, for some long time, he was lost to me as to the rest of the world. The first memorial I had of him was a gentleman, with his hair in disorder, rushing into my cottage at Grasmere, throwing his arms about my neck, and bursting into stormy weeping—it was poor L——!

Yes, it was indeed poor L——, a fugitive from a madhouse,

and throwing himself for security upon the honour and affection of one whom with good reason, he supposed confidentially attached to him. Could there be a situation so full of interest or perplexity? Should any ill happen to himself, or to another, through his present enlargement—should he take any fit of vindictive malice against any person whom he might view as an accomplice in the plans against his own freedom, and probably many persons in the neighbourhood, medical and non-medical, stood liable to such a suspicion—upon me, I felt, as the abettor of his evasion, would all the blame settle. And unfortunately we had, in the recent records of this very vale, a most awful lesson, and still fresh in everybody's remembrance, of the danger connected with this sort of criminal connivance, or passive participation in the purposes of maniacal malignity. A man, named Watson, had often and for years threatened to kill his aged and inoffensive mother. His threats, partly from their own monstrosity, and from the habit of hearing him for years repeating them without any serious attempt to give them effect—partly also from an unwillingness to aggravate the suffering of the poor lunatic, by translating him out of a mountaineer's liberty, into the gloomy confinement of an hospital—were treated with neglect: and at length, after years of disregarded menace, and direct forewarning to the parish authorities, he took an opportunity (which indeed was rarely wanting to him) of killing the poor gray-headed woman by her own fire-side. This case I had before my mind; and it was the more entitled to have weight with me when connected with the altered temper of L——, who now, for the first time in his life, had dropped his gentle and remarkably quiet demeanour, for a tone, savage and ferocious, towards more than one individual. This tone, however, lurked under a mask, and did not come forward, except by fits and starts, for the present. Indeed his whole manner wore the appearance of studied dissimulation, from the moment when he perceived that I was not alone. In the interval of years since I had last seen him, (which might have been in 1818,) my own marriage had taken place; accordingly, on turning round, and seeing a young woman seated at the tea-table, where heretofore he had been so sure of finding me alone, he seemed shocked at the depth of emotion which he had betrayed before a stranger, and anxious to reinstate himself in his own self-respect, by assuming a tone of carelessness and indifference. No

person in the world could feel more profoundly on his account than the young stranger before him, who in fact was not a stranger to his situation and the excess of his misery. But this he could not know; and it was not, therefore, until we found ourselves alone, that he could be prevailed upon to speak of himself, or of the awful circumstances surrounding him, unless in terms of most unsuitable levity. One thing I resolved, at any rate, to make the rule of my conduct towards this unhappy friend, viz. to deal frankly with him, and in no case to make myself a party to any plot upon his personal freedom. Retaken I knew he would be, but not through me; even a murderer in such a case, (*i.e.* the case of having thrown himself upon my good faith,) I would not betray. I drew from him an account of the immediate facts in his late escape, and his own acknowledgment that even now the pursuit must be close at hand; probably, that his recaptors were within a few hours' distance of Grasmere; that he would be easily traced. That my cottage furnished no means of concealment, he knew too well; still in these respects he was not worse off in Grasmere than elsewhere; and, at any rate, it might save him from immediate renewal of his agitation, and might procure for him one night of luxurious rest and relaxation, by means of conversation with a friend, if he would make up his mind to stay with us until his pursuers should appear; and then I could easily contrive to delay, for at least one day and night, by throwing false information in their way, such as would send them on to Keswick at least, if not to Whitehaven, through the collusion of the very few persons who could have seen him enter my door. My plan was simple and feasible: but somehow or other, and, I believe, chiefly because he did not find me alone, nothing I could say had any weight with him; nor would he be persuaded to stay longer than for a little tea. Staying so short a time, he found it difficult to account for having ever come. But it was too evidently useless to argue the point with him; for he was altered, and had become obstinate and intractable. I prepared, therefore, to gratify him according to his own plan, by bearing him company on the road to Ambleside, and (as he said) to Brathay. We set off on foot: the distance to Ambleside is about three and a half miles; and one-third of this distance brought us to an open plain on the margin of Rydalmere, where the road lies entirely open to the water. This lake is unusually shallow, by comparison with all its neighbours;

but, at the point I speak of, it takes (especially when seen under any mode of imperfect light) the appearance of being gloomily deep: two islands of exquisite beauty, but strongly discriminated in character, and a sort of recess or bay in the opposite shore, across which the shadows of the hilly margin stretch with great breadth and solemnity of effect to the very centre of the lake, together with the very solitary character of the entire valley, on which (excluding the little hamlet in its very gorge or entrance) there is not more than one single house, combine to make the scene as impressive by night as any in the lake country. At this point it was that my poor friend paused to converse, and, as it seemed, to take his leave, with an air of peculiar sadness, as if he had foreseen (what in fact proved to be the truth) that we now saw each other for the final time. The spot seemed favourable to confidential talk; and here, therefore, he proceeded to make his heart-rending communication: here he told me rapidly the tale of his sufferings, and, what oppressed his mind far more than those at this present moment, of the cruel indignities to which he had been under the necessity of submitting. In particular, he said that a man of great muscular power had instructions to knock him down whenever he made any allusion to certain speculative subjects, which the presiding authorities of the asylum chose to think connected with his unhappy disease. Many other brutalities, damnable and dishonouring to human nature, were practised in this asylum, not always by abuse of the powers lodged in the servants, but by direct authority from the governors; and yet it had been selected as the one most favourable to a liberal treatment of the patients; and, in reality, it continued to hold a very high reputation. Great and monstrous are the abuses which have been detected in such institutions, and exposed by Parliamentary interference, as well as by the energy of individual philanthropists: but it occurs to one most forcibly, that, after all, the light of this Parliamentary torch must have been but feeble and partial, when it was possible for cases such as these to escape all general notice, and for the establishment which fostered them to retain a character as high as any in the land for enlightened humanity. Perhaps the paramount care in the treatment of lunatics should be directed towards those appliances, and that mode of discipline which is best fitted for restoring the patient finally to a sane condition; but the *second* place in the machinery of his proper

management, should be reserved for that system of attentions, medical or non-medical, which has the best chance of making him happy for the present; and especially because his present happiness must always be one of the directest avenues to his restoration. In the present case, could it be imagined that the shame, agitation, and fury, which convulsed poor Lloyd, as he went over the circumstances of his degradation, were calculated for any other than the worst effects upon the state and prospects of his malady? By sustaining the tumult of his brain, they must, almost of themselves, have precluded his restoration. At the side of that quiet lake he stood for nearly an hour, repeating his wrongs, his eyes glaring continually, as the light thrown off from those parts of the lake which reflected bright tracts of sky amongst the clouds fitfully illuminated them, and again and again threatening, with gestures the wildest, vengeance the most savage upon those vile keepers who had so abused any just purposes of authority. He would talk of little else; apparently he could not. A hollow effort he would make, now and then, when his story had apparently reached its close, to sustain the topics of ordinary conversation; but in a minute he had relapsed into the one subject which possessed him. In vain I pressed him to return with me to Grasmere. He was now, for a few hours to come, to be befriended by the darkness; and he resolved to improve the opportunity for some purpose of his own, which, as he shewed no disposition to communicate any part of his future plans, I did not directly inquire into. In fact, part of his purpose, in stopping where he did, had been to let me know that he did not wish for company any further. We parted; and I saw him no more. He was soon recaptured; then transferred to some more eligible asylum; then liberated from all restraint; after which, with his family, he went to France; where again it became necessary to deprive him of liberty. And, finally, in France it was that his feverish existence found at length a natural rest, and an everlasting liberty; for there it was, in a *maison de santé*, at or near Versailles, that he died, (and I believe tranquilly,) a few years after he had left England. Death was indeed to him, in the words of that fine mystic, Blake the artist, a 'golden gate'—the gate of liberation from the captivity of half a life; or, as I once found the case beautifully expressed in a volume of poems, a century old, and otherwise poor enough, for they offered nothing worth recollecting beyond

this single line, in speaking of the particular morning in which some young man had died—

‘That morning brought him peace and liberty.’

Charles L—— never returned to Brathay after he had once been removed from it; and the removal of his family soon followed. Mrs. L——, indeed, returned at intervals from France to England, upon business connected with the interests of her family; and, during one of those fugitive visits, she came to the Lakes, where she selected Grasmere for her residence, so that I had opportunities of seeing her every day, for a space of several weeks. Otherwise, I never again saw any of the family, except one son, an interesting young man, who sought most meritoriously, by bursting asunder the heavy yoke of constitutional inactivity, to extract a balm for his own besetting melancholy, from a constant series of exertions in which he had forced himself to engage, for promoting education or religious knowledge amongst his poorer neighbours. But often and often, in years after all was gone, I have passed old Brathay, or have gone over purposely after dark, about the time when, for many a year, I used to go over to spend the evening; and, seating myself on a stone, by the side of the mountain river Brathay, have stayed for hours listening to the same sound to which so often C—— L—— and I used to hearken together with profound emotion and awe—the sound of pealing anthems, as if streaming from the open portals of some illimitable cathedral; for such a sound does actually arise, in many states of the weather, from the peculiar action of the river Brathay upon its rocky bed; and many times I have heard it, of a quiet night, when no stranger could have been persuaded to believe it other than the sound of choral chanting—distant, solemn, saintly. Its meaning and expression were, in those earlier years, uncertain and general; not more pointed or determined in the direction which it impressed upon one’s feelings than the light of setting suns; and sweeping, in fact, the whole harp of pensive sensibilities, rather than striking the chord of any one specific sentiment. But since the ruin or dispersion of that household, after the smoke had ceased to ascend from their hearth, or the garden walks to re-echo their voices, oftentimes, when lying by the river side, I have listened to the same ærial saintly sound, whilst

looking back to that night, long hidden in the forest of receding years, when Charles and Sophia L——, now lying in foreign graves, first dawned upon me, coming suddenly out of rain and darkness; then—young, rich, happy, full of hope, belted with young children, (of whom also most are long dead,) and standing apparently on the verge of a labyrinth of golden hours. Musing on that night in November, 1807, and then upon the wreck that had been wrought by a space of fifteen years, I would say to myself sometimes, and seem to hear it in the songs of this watery cathedral—Put not your trust in any fabric of happiness that has its root in man, or the children of men. Sometimes even I was tempted to discover, in the same music, a sound such as this—Love nothing, love nobody, for thereby comes a killing curse in the rear. But sometimes also, very early on a summer morning, when the dawn was barely beginning to break, all things locked in sleep, and only some uneasy murmur, or cock-crow, at a faint distance, giving a hint of resurrection for earth and her generations, I have heard, in that same chanting of the little mountain river, a more solemn if a less agitated admonition—a requiem over departed happiness, and a protestation against the thought that so many excellent creatures, but a little lower than the angels, whom I have seen only to love in this life—so many of the good, the brave, the beautiful, the wise—can have appeared for no higher purpose or prospect than simply to point a moral, to cause a little joy and many tears, a few perishing moons of happiness and years of vain regret,—No! that the destiny of man is more in correspondence with the grandeur of his endowments; and that our own mysterious tendencies are written hieroglyphically in the vicissitudes of day and night, of winter and summer, and throughout the great alphabet of Nature. But on that theme—Beware, reader! Listen to no *intellectual* argument. One argument there is, one only there is, of philosophic value: an argument drawn from the *moral* nature of man; an argument of Immanuel Kant's. The rest are dust and ashes.

SOCIETY OF THE LAKES

III

[ELIZABETH SMITH, THOMAS WILKINSON,
THE SYMPSONS, AND THE K— FAMILY]*

PASSING onwards from Brathay, a ride of about forty minutes carries you to the summit of a wild heathy tract, along which, even at noonday, few sounds are heard that indicate the presence of man, except now and then a woodman's axe, in some of the many coppicewoods scattered about that neighbourhood. In Northern England there are no sheep-bells; which is an unfortunate defect, as regards the full impression of wild solitudes, whether amongst undulating heaths or towering rocks: at any rate, it is so felt by those who, like myself, have been trained to its soothing effects upon the hills of Somersetshire—the Cheddar, the Mendip, or the Quantock—or any other of those breezy downs, which once constituted such delightful local distinctions for four or five counties in that south-west angle of England. At all hours of day or night, this silvery tinkle was delightful; but, after sunset, in the solemn hour of gathering twilight, heard (as it always was) intermittingly, and at great varieties of distance, it formed the most impressive incident for the ear, and the most in harmony with the other circumstances of the scenery, that perhaps, anywhere exists—not excepting even the natural sounds, the swelling and dying intonations of insects wheeling in their vesper flights. Silence and desolation are never felt so profoundly as when they are interrupted by solemn sounds, recurring by uncertain intervals, and from distant places. But in these Westmoreland heaths, and uninhabited ranges of hilly ground, too often nothing is heard, except, occasionally, the wild cry of a bird—the plover, the snipe, or perhaps the raven's croak. The general impression is, therefore, cheerless; and the more are you

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for June 1840.

rejoiced when, looking down from some one of the eminences which you have been gradually ascending, you descry, at a great depth below,¹ the lovely lake of Coniston. The head of this lake is the part chiefly interesting, both from the sublime character of the mountain barriers, and from the intricacy of the little valleys at their base. On a little verdant knoll, near the north-eastern margin of the lake, stands a small villa, called Tent Lodge, built by Colonel Smith, and for many years occupied by his family. That daughter of Colonel Smith who drew the public attention so powerfully upon herself by the splendour of her attainments, had died some months before I came into the country. But yet, as I was subsequently acquainted with her family through the Lloyds, (who were within an easy drive of Tent Lodge,) and as, moreover, with regard to Miss Elizabeth Smith * herself, I came to know more than the world knew—drawing my knowledge from many of her friends, but especially from Mrs. Hannah More, who had been intimately connected with her; for these reason, I shall rehearse the leading points of her story; and the rather, because her family, who were equally interested in that story, long continued to form part of the lake society. On my first becoming acquainted with Miss Smith's pretensions, it is very true that I regarded them with but little concern; for nothing ever interests me less than great philological attainments, or at least that mode of philological learning which consists in mastery over languages. But one reason for this indifference is, that the apparent splendour is too often a false one. They who know a vast number of languages rarely know any one with accuracy; and the more they gain in one way, the more they lose in another. With Miss Smith, however, I gradually came to know that this was not the case; or,

¹ The approach from Ambleside or Hawkshead, though fine, is far less so than from Grasmere, through the vale of Tilberthwaite, to which, for a *coup de théâtre*, I recollect nothing equal. Taking the left-hand road, so as to make for Monk Coniston, and not for Church Coniston, you ascend a pretty steep hill, from which, at a certain point of the little gorge or *hawse*, (*i. e.* *hals*, neck or throat, viz. the dip in any hill through which the road is led,) the whole lake, of six miles in length, and the beautiful foregrounds, all rush upon the eye with the effect of a pantomimic surprise—not by a graduated revelation, but by an instantaneous flash. [Q.]

* Elizabeth Smith (1776–1806) was a largely self-taught linguist from whose papers several translations from German and Hebrew were published posthumously.

at any rate, but partially the case; for, of some languages which she possessed, and those the least accessible, it appeared, finally, that she had even a critical knowledge. It created also a secondary interest in these difficult accomplishments of hers, to find that they were so very extensive. Secondly, That they were pretty nearly all of self-acquisition. Thirdly, That they were borne so meekly, and with unaffected absence of all ostentation. As to the first point, it appears (from Mrs. H. Bowdler's Letter to Dr. Mummsen, the friend of Klopstock) that she made herself mistress of the French, the Italian, the Spanish, the Latin, the German, the Greek, and the Hebrew languages. She had no inconsiderable knowledge of the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Persic. She was a good geometrician and algebraist. She was a very expert musician. She drew from nature, and had an accurate knowledge of perspective. Finally, she manifested an early talent for poetry; but, from pure modesty, destroyed most of what she had written, as soon as her acquaintance with the Hebrew models had elevated the standard of true poetry in her mind, so as to disgust her with what she now viewed as the tameness and inefficiency of her own performances. As to the second point—that for these attainments she was indebted, almost exclusively, to her own energy; this is placed beyond all doubt, by the fact, that the only governess she ever had (a young lady not much beyond her own age) did not herself possess, and therefore could not have communicated, any knowledge of languages, beyond a little French and Italian. Finally, as to the modesty with which she wore her distinctions, *that* is sufficiently established by every page of her printed works, and her letters. Greater diffidence, as respected herself, or less willingness to obtrude her knowledge upon strangers, or even upon those correspondents who would have wished her to make a little more display, cannot be imagined. And yet I repeat, that her knowledge was as sound and as profound as it was extensive. For, taking only one instance of this, her Translation of Job has been pronounced, by Biblical critics of the first rank, a work of real and intrinsic value, without any reference to the disadvantages of the translator, or without needing any allowances whatever. In particular, Dr. Magee, the celebrated writer on the Atonement, and subsequently a dignitary of the Irish Church—certainly one of the best qualified judges at that time—describes it as 'conveying more of the character and meaning of the Hebrew, with fewer departures

from the idiom of the English, than any other translation whatever that we possess.' So much for the scholarship; whilst he rightly notices, in proof of the translator's taste and discretion, that 'from the received version she very seldom unnecessarily deviates': thus refusing to disturb what was, generally speaking, so excellent and time-hallowed for any dazzling effects of novelty; and practising this forbearance as much as possible, notwithstanding novelty was, after all, the main attraction upon which the new translation must rest.

The example of her modesty, however, is not more instructive than that of her continued struggle with difficulties in pursuing knowledge, and with misfortunes in supporting a Christian fortitude. I shall briefly sketch her story:—She was born at Burnhall, in the county of Durham, at the latter end of the year 1776. Early in 1782, when she had just entered her sixth year, her parents removed into Suffolk, in order to be near a blind relation, who looked with anxiety to the conscientious attentions of Mrs. Smith, in superintending his comforts and interests. This occupation absorbed so much of her time, that she found it necessary to obtain the aid of a stranger in directing the studies of her daughter. An opportunity just then offered of attaining this object, concurrently with another not less interesting to herself, viz. that of offering an asylum to a young lady who had recently been thrown adrift upon the world by the misfortunes of her parents. They had very suddenly fallen from a station of distinguished prosperity; and the young lady herself, then barely sixteen, was treading that path of severe adversity, upon which, by a most singular parallelism of ill fortune, her young pupil was destined to follow her steps at exactly the same age. Being so prematurely called to the office of governess, this young lady was expected rather to act as an elder companion, and as a lightener of the fatigues attached to their common studies, than exactly as their directress. And, at all events, from her who was the only even nominal governess that Miss Smith ever had, it is certain that she could have learned little or nothing. This arrangement subsisted between two and three years, when the death of their blind kinsman allowed Mr. Smith's family to leave Suffolk and resume their old domicile of Burnhall. But from this, by a sudden gleam of treacherous prosperity, they were summoned, in the following year, (June, 1785,) to the splendid inheritance of Piercefield—a show-place upon the river Wye;

and, next after Tintern Abbey and the river itself, an object of attraction to all who then visited the Wye.

A residence on the Wye, besides its own natural attraction, has this collateral advantage, that it brings Bath (not to mention Clifton and the Hot-wells) within a visiting distance for people who happen to have carriages; and Bath, it is hardly necessary to say, besides its stationary body of polished and intellectual residents, has also a floating casual population of eminent or interesting persons, gathered into this focus from every quarter of the empire. Amongst the literary connections which the Piercefield family had formed in Bath, was one with Mrs. Bowdler and her daughter—two ladies not distinguished by any very powerful talents, but sufficiently tinctured with literature and the love of literature to be liberal in their opinions. And, fortunately, (as it turned out for Miss Smith,) they were eminently religious: but not in a bigotted way; for they were conciliating and winning in the outward expression of their religious character; capable of explaining their own creed with intelligent consistency; and, finally, were the women to recommend any creed, by the sanctity and the benignity of their own lives. This strong religious bias of the two Bath ladies, operated in Miss Smith's favour by a triple service. First of all, it was this depth of religious feeling, and, consequently, of interest in the Scriptures, which had originally moved the elder Mrs. Bowdler to study the Hebrew and the Greek, as the two languages in which they had been originally delivered. And this example it was of *female* triumph over their difficulties, together with the proof thus given that such attainments were entirely reconcilable with feminine gentleness, which first suggested to Miss Smith the project of her philological studies; and, doubtless, these studies, by the constant and agreeable occupation which they afforded, overspread the whole field of her life with pleasurable activity. 'From the above-mentioned visit,' says her mother, writing to Dr. Randolph, and referring to the visit which these Bath ladies had made to Piercefield—'from the above-mentioned visit I date the turn of study which Elizabeth ever after pursued, and which I firmly believe the amiable conduct of our guests first led her to delight in.' Secondly, to the religious sympathies which connected these two ladies with Miss Smith, was owing the fervour of that friendship, which afterwards, in their adversity, the Piercefield family found more

strenuously exerted in their behalf by the Bowdlers than by all the rest of their connections. And, finally, it was this piety and religious resignation, with which she had been herself inoculated by her Bath friends, that, throughout the calamitous era of her life, enabled Miss Elizabeth Smith to maintain her own cheerfulness unbroken, and greatly to support the failing fortitude of her mother.

This visit of her Bath friends to Piercefield—so memorable an event for the whole subsequent life of Miss Smith—occurred in the summer of 1789; consequently, when she was just twelve and a half years old. And the impressions then made upon her childish, but unusually thoughtful, mind, were kept up by continual communications, personal or written, through the years immediately succeeding. Just two and a half years after, in the very month when Miss Smith accomplished her fifteenth year, upon occasion of going through the rite of Confirmation, according to the discipline of the English Church, she received a letter of religious counsel—grave, affectionate, but yet humble—from the elder Mrs. Bowdler, which might almost have been thought to have proceeded from a writer who had looked behind the curtain of fate, and had seen the forge at whose fires the shafts of Heaven were even now being forged.

Just twelve months from the date of this letter, in the very month when Miss Elizabeth Smith completed her sixteenth year, the storm descended upon the house of Piercefield. The whole estate, a splendid one, was swept away, by the failure (as I have heard) of one banking-house; nor were there recovered, until some years after, any slender fragments of that estate. Piercefield was, of course, sold; but that was not the heaviest of her grievances to Miss Smith. She was now far advanced upon her studious career; for it should be mentioned, as a lesson to other young ladies of what may be accomplished by unassisted labour, that, between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one, all her principal acquisitions were made. No treasure, therefore, could, in her eyes, be of such priceless value as the Piercefield library; but this also followed the general wreck: not a volume, not a pamphlet, was reserved; for the family were proud in their integrity, and would receive no favours from the creditors. Under this scorching test, applied to the fidelity of friends, many, whom Mrs. Smith mentions in one of her letters under the name of 'summer friends,'

fled from them by crowds; dinners, balls, soirées—credit, influence, support—these things were no longer to be had from Piercefield. But more annoying even than the fickle levity of such open deserters, was the timid and doubtful countenance, as I have heard Mrs. Smith say, which was still offered to them by some who did not relish, *for their own sakes*, being classed with those who had paid their homage only to the fine house and fine equipages of Piercefield. These persons continued, therefore, to send invitations to the family; but so frigidly, that every expression manifested but too forcibly how disagreeable was the duty with which they were complying; and how much more they submitted to it for their own reputation's sake, than for any kindness they felt to their old friends. Mrs. Smith was herself a very haughty woman, and it maddened her to be the object of condescensions so insolent and so reluctant.

Meantime, her daughter, young as she was, became the moral support of her whole family, and the fountain from which they all drew consolation and fortitude. She was confirmed in her religious tendencies by two circumstances of her recent experience: one was, that she, the sole person of her family who courted religious consolations, was also the sole person who had been able to maintain cheerfulness and uniform spirits: the other was, that although it could not be truly said of *all* their worldly friends that they had forsaken them, yet, of their religious friends it could be said, that not one had done so; and at last, when for some time they had been so far reduced as not to have a roof over their heads, by one of these religious friends it was that they were furnished with every luxury as well as comfort of life; and, in a spirit of such sisterly kindness, as made the obligation not painful to the proudest amongst them.

It was in 1792 that the Piercefield family had been ruined; and in 1794, out of the wrecks which had been gathered together, Mr. Smith (the father of the family) bought a commission in the army. For some time the family continued to live in London, Bath, and other parts of England; but, at length, Mr. Smith's regiment was ordered to the west of Ireland; and the ladies of his family resolved to accompany him to headquarters. In passing through Wales (May, 1796,) they paid a visit to those sentimental anchorites of the last generation, whom so many of us must still remember—Miss Ponsonby, and Lady Eleanor Butler, (a sister of Lord

Ormond,) whose hermitage stood near to Llangollen, and, therefore, close to the usual Irish route, by way of Holyhead. On landing in Ireland, they proceeded to a seat of Lord Kingston—a kind-hearted, hospitable Irishman, who was on the old Piercefield list of friends, and had never wavered in his attachment. Here they stayed three weeks. Miss Smith renewed, on this occasion, her friendship with Lady Isabella King, the daughter of Lord Kingston; and a little incident connected with this visit, gave her an opportunity afterwards of showing her delicate sense of the sacred character which attaches to gifts of friendship, and showing it by an ingenious device, that may be worth the notice of other young ladies in the same case. Lady Isabella had given to Miss Smith a beautiful horse, called Brunette. In process of time, when they had ceased to be in the neighbourhood of any regimental stables, it became matter of necessity that Brunette should be parted with. To have given the animal away, had that been otherwise possible, might only have been delaying the sale for a short time. After some demur, therefore, Miss Smith adopted this plan: she sold Brunette; but applied the whole of the price, 120 guineas, to the purchase of a splendid harp. The harp was christened Brunette, and was religiously preserved to the end of her life. Now Brunette, after all, must have died in a few years; but, by translating her friend's gift into another form, she not only connected the image of her distant friend, and her sense of that friend's kindness, with a pleasure and a useful purpose of her own, but she conferred on that gift a perpetuity of existence.

At length came the day when the Smiths were to quit Kingston Lodge for the quarters of the regiment. And now came the first rude trial of Mrs. Smith's fortitude, as connected with points of mere decent comfort. Hitherto, floating amongst the luxurious habitations of opulent friends, she might have felt many privations as regarded splendour and direct personal power, but never as regarded the primary elements of comfort, warmth, cleanliness, convenient arrangements. But on this journey, which was performed by all the party on horseback, it rained incessantly. They reached their quarters drenched with wet, weary, hungry, forlorn. The quartermaster had neglected to give any directions for their suitable accommodation—no preparations whatever had been made for receiving them; and, from the luxuries of Lord Kingston's mansion, which habit had made so familiar to them all, the

ladies found themselves suddenly transferred to a miserable Irish cabin—dirty, narrow, nearly quite unfurnished, and thoroughly disconsolate. Mrs. Smith's proud spirit fairly gave way, and she burst out into a fit of weeping. Upon this, her daughter, Elizabeth, (and Mrs. Smith herself it was that told the anecdote, and often she told it, or told others of the same character, at Lloyd's,) in a gentle, soothing tone, began to suggest the many blessings which lay before them in life, and some even for this evening.

'Blessings, child!'—her mother impatiently interrupted her. 'What sort of blessings? Irish blessings!—county of Sligo blessings, I fancy. Or, perhaps, you call this a blessing?' holding up a miserable fragment of an iron rod, which had been left by way of poker, or rather as a substitute for the whole assortment of fire-irons. The daughter laughed; but she changed her wet dress expeditiously, assumed an apron; and so various were her accomplishments, that, in no long time, she had gathered together a very comfortable dinner for her parents, and, amongst other things, a currant tart, which she had herself made, in a tenement absolutely unfurnished of every kitchen utensil.

In the autumn of this year, (1796,) they returned to England; and, after various migrations through the next four years, amongst which was another and longer visit to Ireland, in 1800, they took up their abode in the sequestered vale of Patterdale. Here they had a cottage upon the banks of Ulleswater; the most gorgeous of the English lakes, from the rich and ancient woods which possess a great part of its western side; the sublimest, as respects its mountain accompaniments, except only, perhaps, Wastdale; and, I believe, the largest; for, though only nine miles in length, and, therefore shorter by about two miles than Windermere, it averages a greater breadth. Here, at this time, was living Mr. Clarkson—that son of thunder, that Titan, who was in fact the one great Atlas that bore up the Slave-Trade Abolition cause—now resting from his mighty labours and nerve-shattering perils. So much had *his* nerves been shattered by all that he had gone through in toil, in suffering, and in anxiety, that, for many years, I have heard it said, he found himself unable to walk up-stairs without tremulous motions of his limbs. He was, perhaps, too iron a man, too much like the *Talus* of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' to appreciate so gentle a creature as Miss Elizabeth Smith. A more suitable friend, and one who thoroughly

comprehended her, and expressed his admiration for her in verse, was Thomas Wilkinson of Yanwath, a Quaker, a man of taste, and of delicate sensibility. He wrote verses occasionally; and though feebly enough as respected poetic power, there were often such delicate touches of feeling, such gleams of real tenderness, in some redeeming part of each poem, that even Wordsworth admired and read them aloud with pleasure. Indeed Wordsworth has addressed to him one copy of verses, or rather to his spade, which was printed in the collection of 1807, and which Lord Jeffrey, after quoting one line, dismissed as too dull for repetition.*

During this residence upon Ulleswater (winter of 1800) it was, that a very remarkable incident befell Miss Smith. I have heard it often mentioned, and sometimes with a slight variety of circumstances; but I here repeat it from an account drawn up by Miss Smith herself, who was most literally exact and faithful to the truth in all reports of her own personal experience. There is, on the western side of Ulleswater, a fine cataract, (or, in the language of the country, a *force*,) known by the name of Airey Force; and it is of importance enough, especially in rainy seasons, to attract numerous visitors from among 'the Lakers.' Thither, with some purpose of sketching, not the whole scene, but some picturesque features of it, Miss Smith had gone, quite unaccompanied. The road to it lies through Gobarrow Park; and it was usual, at that time, to take a guide from the family of the Duke of Norfolk's keeper, who lived in Lyulph's Tower—a solitary hunting lodge, built by his Grace for the purposes of an annual visit which he used to pay to his estates in that part of England. She, however, thinking herself sufficiently familiar with the localities, had declined to encumber her motions with such an attendant; consequently she was alone. For half an hour, or more, she continued to ascend; and, being a good 'cragswoman,' from the experience she had won in Wales as well as in northern England, she had reached an altitude much beyond what would generally be thought corresponding to the time. The path had vanished altogether; but she continued to pick out one for herself amongst the stones, sometimes receding from the *force*, sometimes approaching it, according to the openings allowed by the scattered masses

* 'To the Spade of a Friend, (An Agriculturist.) Composed while we were labouring in his Pleasure-Ground.' It is in this poem that Wordsworth uses the phrase 'too pure to be refined' which De Quincey quotes on p. 300.

of rock. Pressing forward in this hurried way, and never looking back, all at once she found herself in a little stony chamber, from which there was no egress possible in advance. She stopped and looked up. There was a frightful silence in the air. She felt a sudden palpitation at her heart, and a panic from she knew not what. Turning, however, hastily, she soon wound herself out of this ærial dungeon; but by steps so rapid and agitated, that, at length, on looking round, she found herself standing at the brink of a chasm, frightful to look down. That way, it was clear enough, all retreat was impossible; but, on turning round, retreat seemed in every direction alike even more impossible. Down the chasm, at least, she might have leaped, though with little or no chance of escaping with life; but on all other quarters it seemed to her eye that, at no price, could she effect an exit, since the rocks stood round her, in a semi-circus, all lofty, all perpendicular, all glazed with trickling water, or smooth as polished porphyry. Yet how, then, had she reached the point? The same track, if she could hit that track, would surely secure her escape. Round and round she walked; gazed with almost despairing eyes; her breath became thicker and thicker; for path she could not trace by which it was possible for her to have entered. Finding herself grow more and more confused, and every instant nearer to sinking into some fainting fit or convulsion, she resolved to sit down and turn her thoughts quietly into some less exciting channel. This she did; gradually recovered some self-possession; and then suddenly a thought rose up to her, that she was in the hands of God, and that He would not forsake her. But immediately came a second and reproving thought—that this confidence in God's protection might have been justified had she been ascending the rocks upon any mission of duty; but what right could *she* have to any providential deliverance, who had been led thither in a spirit of levity and carelessness? I am here giving *her* view of the case; for, as to myself, I fear greatly that if *her* steps were erring ones, it is but seldom indeed that *nous autres* can pretend to be treading upon right paths. Once again she rose; and, supporting herself upon a little sketching-stool that folded up into a stick, she looked upwards, in the hope that some shepherd might, by chance, be wandering in those ærial regions; but nothing could she see except the tall birches growing at the brink of the highest summits, and the clouds slowly sailing overhead. Suddenly, however, as she

swept the whole circuit of her station with her alarmed eye, she saw clearly, about 200 yards beyond her own position, a lady, in a white muslin morning robe, such as were then universally worn by young ladies until dinner-time. The lady beckoned with a gesture and in a manner that, in a moment, gave her confidence to advance—*how* she could not guess, but in some way that baffled all power to retrace it, she found instantaneously the outlet which previously had escaped her. She continued to advance towards the lady, whom now, in the same moment, she found to be standing upon the other side of the *force*, and also to be her own sister. How or why that young lady, whom she had left at home earnestly occupied with her own studies, should have followed and overtaken her filled her with perplexity. But this was no situation for putting questions; for the guiding sister began to descend, and, by a few simple gestures, just serving to indicate when Miss Elizabeth was to approach and when to leave the brink of the torrent, she gradually led her down to a platform of rock, from which the further descent was safe and conspicuous. There Miss Smith paused, in order to take breath from her panic, as well as to exchange greetings and questions with her sister. But sister there was none. All trace of her had vanished; and when, in two hours after, she reached her home, Miss Smith found her sister in the same situation and employment in which she had left her; and the whole family assured her that she had never stirred from the house.

In 1801, I believe, it was that the family removed from Patterdale to Coniston. Certainly they were settled there in the spring of 1802; for, in the May of that spring, Miss Elizabeth Hamilton—a writer now very much forgotten, or remembered only by her ‘Cottagers of Glenburnie,’ but then a person of mark and authority in the literary circles of Edinburgh—paid a visit to the lakes, and stayed there for many months, together with her married sister, Mrs. Blake; and both ladies cultivated the friendship of the Smiths. Miss Hamilton was captivated with the family; and, of the sisters in particular, she speaks as of persons that, ‘in the days of paganism, would have been worshipped as beings of a superior order; so elegantly graceful do they appear, when, with easy motion, they guide their light boat over the waves.’ And of Miss Elizabeth, separately, she says, on another occasion:—‘I never before saw so much of Miss Smith; and, in the three days

she spent with us, the admiration which I had always felt for her extraordinary talents, and as extraordinary virtues, was hourly augmented. She is, indeed, a most charming creature; and, if one could inoculate her with a little of the Scotch frankness, I think she would be one of the most perfect of human beings.'

About four years had been delightfully passed in Coniston. In the summer of 1805, Miss Smith laid the foundation of her fatal illness in the following way, according to her own account of the case, to an old servant, a very short time before she died:— 'One very hot evening, in July, I took a book, and walked about two miles from home, when I seated myself on a stone beside the lake. Being much engaged by a poem I was reading, I did not perceive that the sun was gone down, and was succeeded by a very heavy dew, till, in a moment, I felt struck on the chest as if with a sharp knife. I returned home, but said nothing of the pain. The next day, being also very hot, and every one busy in the hay-field, I thought I would take a rake, and work very hard to produce perspiration, in the hope that it might remove the pain; but it did not.' From that time, a bad cough, with occasional loss of voice, gave reason to suspect some organic injury of the lungs. Late in the autumn of this year, (1805) Miss Smith accompanied her mother and her two younger sisters to Bristol, Bath, and other places in the south, on visits to various friends. Her health went through various fluctuations until May of the following year, when she was advised to try Matlock. Here, after spending three weeks, she grew worse; and as there was no place which she liked so well as the lakes, it was resolved to turn homewards. About the beginning of June, she and her mother returned alone to Coniston: one of her sisters was now married; her three brothers were in the army or navy; and her father almost constantly with his regiment. Through the next two months she faded quietly away, sitting always in a tent,¹ that had been pitched upon the lawn, and which remained open continually to receive the fanning of the intermitting airs upon the lake, as well as to admit the bold mountain scenery to the north. She lived nearly through the first week of August, dying on the morning of August 7; and the circumstances of her last night are thus recorded by her mother:— 'At

¹ And, in allusion to this circumstance, the house afterwards raised on a neighbouring spot, at this time suggested by Miss Smith, received the name of Tent Lodge. [Q.]

nine she went to bed. I resolved to quit her no more, and went to prepare for the night. Turpin [Miss Smith's maid] came to say that Elizabeth entreated I would not stay in her room. I replied—"On that one subject I am resolved: no power on earth shall keep me from her; so, go to bed yourself." Accordingly, I returned to her room; and, at ten, gave her the usual dose of laudanum. After a little time, she fell into a doze, and, I thought, slept till one. She was uneasy and restless, but never complained; and, on my wiping the cold sweat off her face, and bathing it with camphorated vinegar, which I did very often in the course of the night, she thanked me, smiled, and said—"That is the greatest comfort I have." She slept again for a short time; and, at half-past four, asked for some chicken broth, which she took perfectly well. On being told the hour, she said—"How long this night is!" She continued very uneasy; and, in half-an-hour after, on my inquiring if I could move the pillow, or do anything to relieve her, she replied—"There is nothing for it but quiet." At six she said—"I must get up, and have some mint tea." I then called for Turpin, and felt my angel's pulse: it was fluttering; and, by that, I knew I should soon lose her. She took the tea well. Turpin began to put on her clothes, and was proceeding to dress her, when she laid her head upon the faithful creature's shoulder, became convulsed in the face, spoke not, looked not, and in ten minutes expired.'

She was buried in Hawkshead churchyard, where a small tablet of white marble is raised to her memory, on which there is the scantiest record that, for a person so eminently accomplished, I have ever met with. After mentioning her birth and age, (twenty-nine,) it closes thus:—'She possessed great talents, exalted virtues, and humble piety.' Anything so unsatisfactory or so commonplace I have rarely known. As much, or more, is often said of the most insipid people; whereas Miss Smith was really a most extraordinary person. I have conversed with Mrs. Hannah More often about her; and I never failed to draw forth some fresh anecdote illustrating the vast extent of her knowledge, the simplicity of her character, the gentleness of her manners, and her unaffected humility. She passed, it is true, almost inaudibly through life; and the stir which was made after her death soon subsided. But the reason was—that she wrote but little! Had it been possible for the world to measure her by her powers, rather than her performances, she would have been placed, perhaps, in

the estimate of posterity, at the head of learned women; whilst her sweet and feminine character would have rescued her from all shadow and suspicion of that reproach which too often settles upon the learned character, when supported by female aspirants.

The family of Tent Lodge continued to reside at Coniston for many years; and they were connected with the Lake literary clan chiefly through the Lloyds and those who visited the Lloyds; for it is another and striking proof of the slight hold which Wordsworth, etc., had upon the public esteem in those days, that even Miss Smith, with all her excessive diffidence in judging of books and authors, never seems, by any one of her letters, to have felt the least interest about Wordsworth or Coleridge; nor did Miss Hamilton, with all her *esprit de corps* and acquired interest in everything at all bearing upon literature, ever mention them in those of her letters which belong to the period of her Lake visit in 1802; nor, for the six or seven months which she passed in that country, and within a short morning ride of Grasmere, did she ever think it worth her while to seek an introduction to any one of the resident authors.

Yet this could not be altogether from ignorance that such people existed; for Thomas Wilkinson, the intimate and admiring friend of Miss Smith, was also the friend of Wordsworth; and, for some reason that I never could fathom, he was a sort of pet with Wordsworth. Professor Wilson and myself were never honoured with one line, one allusion, from his pen; but many a person, of particular feebleness, has received that honour. Amongst these I may rank Thomas Wilkinson; not that I wish to speak contemptuously of him: he was a Quaker, of elegant habits, rustic simplicity, and with tastes, as Wordsworth affirms, 'too pure to be refined.' His cottage was seated not far from the great castle of the Lowthers; and, either from mere whim—as sometimes such whims do possess great ladies—whims, I mean, for drawing about them odd-looking, old-world people, as *piquant* contrasts to the fine gentlemen of their own society, or because they did really feel a homely dignity in the plain-speaking 'Friend,' and liked, for a frolic, to be *thou'd* and *thee'd*—or some motive or other, at any rate, they introduced themselves to Mr. Wilkinson's cottage; and I believe that the connection was afterwards improved by the use they found for his services in forming walks through the woods of Lowther, and leading them in such a

circuit as to take advantage of all the most picturesque stations. As a poet, I presume that Mr. Wilkinson could hardly have recommended himself to the notice of ladies who would naturally have modelled their tastes upon the favourites of the age. A poet, however, in a gentle, unassuming way, he was; and he, therefore, is to be added to the *corps littéraire* of the Lakes; and Yanwath to be put down as the advanced post of that *corps* to the north.

Two families there still remain, which I am tempted to gather into my group of Lake society—notwithstanding it is true that the two most interesting members of the first had died a little before the period at which my sketch commences; and the second, though highly intellectual in the person of that particular member whom I have chiefly to commemorate, was not, properly speaking, literary; and, moreover, belongs to a later period of my own Westmoreland experience—being, at the time of my settlement in Grasmere, a girl at a boarding-school. The first was the family of the Symptons, whom Mr. Wordsworth has spoken of, with deep interest, more than once. The eldest son, a clergyman, and, like Wordsworth, an *alumnus* of Hawkshead school, wrote, amongst other poems, ‘The Vision of Alfred.’ Of these poems, Wordsworth says, that they ‘are little known; but they contain passages of splendid description; and the versification of his “Vision” is harmonious and animated.’ This is much for Wordsworth to say; and he does him even the honour of quoting the following illustrative simile from his description of the sylphs in motion, (which sylphs constitute the machinery of his poem;) and, probably, the reader will be of opinion that this passage justifies the praise of Wordsworth. It is founded, as he will see, on the splendid scenery of the heavens in Polar latitudes, as seen by reflection in polished ice at midnight.

‘Less varying hues beneath the Pole adorn
The streamy glories of the Boreal morn,
That, waving to and fro, their radiance shed
On Bothnia’s gulf, with glassy ice o’erspread;
Where the lone native, as he homeward glides
On polished sandals o’er the imprisoned tides,
Sees, at a glance, above him and below,
Two rival heavens with equal splendour glow:
Stars, moons, and meteors, ray oppose to ray;
And solemn midnight pours the blaze of day.’

'He was a man,' says Wordsworth, in conclusion, 'of ardent feeling; and his faculties of mind, particularly his memory, were extraordinary.' Brief notices of his life ought to find a place in the history of Westmoreland.

But it was the father of this Joseph Sympson who gave its chief interest to the family. Him Wordsworth has described, at the same time sketching his history, with a fulness and a circumstantiality beyond what he has conceded to any other of the real personages in 'The Excursion.' 'A priest he was by function'; but a priest of that class which is now annually growing nearer to extinction among us, not being supported by any sympathies in this age.

'His course,
From his youth up, and high as manhood's noon,
Had been irregular—I might say wild;
By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care
Too little check'd. An active, ardent mind;
A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme
To cheat the sadness of a rainy day;
Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games;
A generous spirit, and a body strong
To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl—
Had earned for him sure welcome, and the rights
Of a priz'd visitant in the jolly hall
Of country squire, or at the statelier board
Of Duke or Earl—from scenes of courtly pomp
Withdrawn, to while away the summer hours
In condescension amongst rural guests.
With these high comrades he had revelled long,
By hopes of coming patronage beguiled,
Till the heart sicken'd.'

Slowly, however, and indignantly his eyes opened fully to the windy treachery of all the promises held out to him; and, at length, for mere bread, he accepted, from an 'unthought-of patron,' a most 'secluded chapelry' in Cumberland. This was 'the little, lowly house of prayer' of Wythburn, elsewhere celebrated by Wordsworth; and, for its own sake, interesting to all travellers, both for its deep privacy, and for the excessive humility of its external pretensions, whether as to size or ornament. Were

it not for its twin sister at Buttermere, it would be the very smallest place of worship in all England; and it looks even smaller than it is, from its position; for it stands at the base of the mighty Helvellyn, close to the high-road between Ambleside and Keswick, and within speaking distance of the upper lake—for Wythburn water, though usually passed by the traveller under the impression of absolute unity in its waters, owing to the interposition of a rocky screen, is, in fact, composed of two separate lakes). To this miniature and most secluded congregation of shepherds, did the once dazzling parson officiate as pastor; and it seems to amplify the impression already given of his versatility, that he became a diligent and most fatherly, though not peculiarly devout teacher and friend. The temper, however, of the northern Dalesmen, is not constitutionally turned to religion; consequently that part of his defects did him no special injury, when compensated (as, in the judgment of these Dalesmen, it *was* compensated) by ready and active kindness, charity the most diffusive, and patriarchal hospitality. The living, as I have said, was in Wythburn; but there was no parsonage, and no house in this poor dale which was disposable for that purpose. So Mr. Sympson crossed the marches of the sister counties, which to him was about equidistant from his chapel and his house, into Grasmere, on the Westmoreland side. There he occupied a cottage by the roadside; a situation which, doubtless, gratified at once his social and his hospitable propensities; and, at length, from age, as well as from paternal character and station, came to be regarded as the patriarch of the vale. Before I mention the afflictions which fell upon his latter end, and by way of picturesque contrast to his closing scene, let me have permission to cite Wordsworth's sketch, (taken from his own boyish remembrance of the case,) describing the first gipsy-like entrance of the brilliant parson and his household into Grasmere—so equally out of harmony with the decorums of his sacred character and the splendours of his past life—

*Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads
By which our northern wilds could then be crossed;
And into most of these secluded vales
Was no access for wain, heavy or light.
So at his dwelling-place the priest arriv'd,
With store of household goods in panniers slung
On sturdy horses, graced with jingling bells;

And on the back of more ignoble beast,
That, with like burthen of effects most priz'd
Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.
Young was I then, a schoolboy of eight years:
But still methinks I see them as they pass'd
In order—drawing toward their wish'd-for home.
Rock'd by the motion of a trusty ass,
Two ruddy children hung, a well-pois'd freight—
Each in his basket nodding drowsily,
Their bonnets, I remember, wreath'd with flowers,
Which told it was the pleasant month of June.
And close behind the comely matron rode—
A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,
And with a lady's mien.—From far they came,
Even from Northumbrian hills: yet theirs had been
A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheer'd
By music, pranks, and laughter-stirring jest;
And freak put on, and arch word dropp'd—to swell
That cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise
Which gathered round the slowly moving train.
“Whence do they come? and with what errand charg'd?
Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe
Who pitch their tents under the greenwood tree?
Or strollers are they, fitted to enact
Fair Rosamond and the Children of the Wood?
When the next village hears the show announc'd
By blast of trumpet?” Plenteous was the growth
Of such conjectures—overheard, or seen,
On many a staring countenance portray'd,
Of boor or burgher, as they march'd along.
And more than once their steadiness of face
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,
And questions in authoritative tone,
By some staid guardian of the public peace,
Checking the sober horse on which he rode,
In his suspicious wisdom; oftener still
By notice indirect or blunt demand
From traveller halting in his own despite
A simple curiosity to ease:—
Of which adventures, that beguil'd and cheer'd
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell
With undiminished glee in hoary age.'

Meantime the lady of the house embellished it with feminine skill; and the homely pastor—for such he had now become—not having any great weight of spiritual duties, busied himself in rural labours and rural sports. But was his mind, though bending submissively to his lot, changed in conformity to his task? No:

‘For he still
Retained a flashing eye, a burning palm,
A stirring foot, a head which beat at nights
Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.
Few likings had he dropp’d, few pleasures lost;
Generous and charitable, prompt to serve;
And still his harsher passions kept their hold—
Anger and indignation. Still he lov’d
The sound of titled names, and talked in glee
Of long past banquetings with high-born friends;
Then from those lulling fits of vain delight
Uprous’d by recollected injury, rail’d
At their false ways disdainfully and oft,
In bitterness and with a threatening eye
Of fire, incens’d beneath its hoary brow.
Those transports, with staid looks of pure good-will
And with soft smile his consort would reprove.
She, far behind him in the race of years,
Yet keeping her first mildness, was advanced
Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,
To that still region whither all are bound.’

Such was the tenor of their lives; such the separate character of their manners and dispositions; and, with unusual quietness of course, both were sailing placidly to their final haven. Death had not visited their happy mansion through a space of forty years—‘sparing both old and young in that abode.’ But calms so deep are ominous—immunities so profound are terrific. Suddenly the signal was given, and all lay desolate.

‘Not twice had fall’n
On those high peaks the first autumnal snow,
Before the greedy visiting was closed,
And the long privileg’d house left empty; swept
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague
Had been among them; all was gentle death,
One after one, with intervals of peace.’

The aged pastor's wife, his son, one of his daughters, and 'a little smiling grandson,' all had gone within a brief series of days. These composed the entire household in Grasmere, (the others having dispersed or married away;) and all were gone but himself, by very many years the oldest of the whole: he still survived. And the whole valley, nay, all the valleys round about, speculated with a tender interest upon what course the desolate old man would take for his support.

'All gone, all vanished! he, deprived and bare
 How will he face the remnant of his life?
 What will become of him? we said, and mus'd
 In sad conjectures.—Shall we meet him now,
 Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks?
 Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,
 Striving to entertain the lonely hours
 With music? (for he had not ceased to touch
 The harp or viol, which himself had fram'd
 For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill).
 What titles will he keep? Will he remain
 Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,
 A planter, and a rearer from the seed?'

Yes; he persevered in all his pursuits; intermitted none of them. Weathered a winter in solitude; once more beheld the glories of a spring, and the resurrection of the flowers upon the graves of his beloved; held out even through the depths of summer into the cheerful season of haymaking, (a season much later in Westmoreland than in the south;) took his rank, as heretofore, amongst the haymakers; sat down at noon for a little rest to his aged limbs; and found even a deeper rest than he was expecting; for, in a moment of time, without a warning, without a struggle, and without a groan, he did indeed rest from his labours for ever. He,

'With his cheerful throng
 Of open projects, and his inward hoard
 Of unsunn'd griefs, too many and too keen,
 Was overcome by unexpected sleep
 In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown,
 Softly and lightly, from a passing cloud,
 Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay
 For noontide solace on the summer grass—
 The warm lap of his mother earth; and so,

Their lenient term of separation pass'd,
 That family—
 By yet a higher privilege—once more
 Were gathered to each other.'

Two surviving members of the family, a son and a daughter, I knew intimately. Both have been long dead: but the children of the daughter—grandsons, therefore, to the patriarch here recorded—are living prosperously, and do honour to the interesting family they represent.

The other family were, if less *generally* interesting by their characters or accomplishments, much more so by the circumstances of their position; and that member of the family with whom accident and neighbourhood had brought me especially connected, was, in her intellectual capacity, probably superior to most of those whom I have had occasion to record. Had no misfortunes settled upon her life prematurely, and with the benefit of a little judicious guidance to her studies, I am of opinion that she would have been a most distinguished person. Her situation, when I came to know her, was one of touching interest. I will state the circumstances:—She was the sole and illegitimate daughter of a country gentleman; and was a favourite with her father, as she well deserved to be, in a degree so excessive—so nearly idolatrous—that I never heard illustrations of it mentioned but that secretly I trembled for the endurance of so perilous a love under the common accidents of life, and still more under the unusual difficulties and snares of her peculiar situation. Her father was, by birth, breeding, and property, a Leicestershire farmer; not, perhaps, what you would strictly call a gentleman, for he affected no refinements of manner, but rather courted the exterior of a bluff, careless yeoman. Still he was of that class whom all people, even then, on his letters, addressed as *esquire*: he had an ample income, and was surrounded with all the luxuries of modern life. In early life—and that was the sole palliation of his guilt—(and yet, again, in another view, aggravated it)—he had allowed himself to violate his own conscience in a way which, from the hour of his error, never ceased to pursue him with remorse, and which was, in fact, its own avenger. Mr. K—— * was a favourite specimen

* Mr King (I owe this identification to Miss Phoebe Johnson, Dove Cottage, Librarian).

of English yeomanly beauty: a fine athletic figure; and with features handsome, well moulded, frank, and generous in their expression, and in a striking degree manly. In fact, he might have sat for Robin Hood. It happened that a young lady of his own neighbourhood, somewhere near Mount Soril I think, fell desperately in love with him. Oh! blindness of the human heart! how deeply did she come to rue the day when she first turned her thoughts to him! At first, however, her case seemed a hopeless one; for she herself was remarkably plain, and Mr. K—— was profoundly in love with the very handsome daughter of a neighbouring farmer. One advantage, however, there was on the side of this plain girl: she was rich; and part of her wealth, or of her expectations, lay in landed property, that would effect a very tempting *arrondissement* of an estate belonging to Mr. K——. Through what course the affair travelled, I never heard more particularly, than that Mr. K—— was besieged and worried out of his steady mind by the solicitations of aunts and other relations, who had all adopted the cause of the heiress. But what finally availed to extort a reluctant consent from him was, the representation made by the young lady's family, and backed by medical men, that she was seriously in danger of dying, unless Mr. K—— would make her his wife. He was no coxcomb; but, when he heard all his own female relations calling him a murderer, and taxing him with having, at times, given some encouragement to the unhappy love-sick girl, in an evil hour he agreed to give up his own sweetheart and marry her. He did so. But no sooner was this fatal step taken than it was repented. His love returned in bitter excess for the girl whom he had forsaken, and with frantic remorse. This girl, at length, by the mere force of his grief, he actually persuaded to live with him as his wife; and when, in spite of all concealments, the fact began to transpire, and the angry wife, in order to break off the connection, obtained his consent to their quitting Leicestershire altogether, and transferring their whole establishment to the Lakes, Mr. K—— evaded the whole object of this manœuvre by secretly contriving to bring her rival also into Westmoreland. Her, however, he placed in another vale; and, for some years, it is pretty certain that Mrs. K—— never suspected the fact. Some said that it was her pride which would not allow her to seem conscious of so great an affront to herself; others, better skilled in deciphering the meaning of manners,

steadfastly affirmed that she was in happy ignorance of an arrangement known to all the country beside. Years passed on; and the situation of the poor wife became more and more gloomy. During those years, she brought her husband no children; on the other hand, her hated rival *had*: Mr. K—— saw growing up about his table two children, a son, and then a daughter, who, in their childhood, must have been beautiful creatures; for the son, when I knew him in after life, though bloated and disfigured a good deal by intemperance, was still a very fine young man; more athletic even than his father; and presenting his father's handsome English yeoman's face, exalted by a Roman dignity in some of the features. The daughter was of the same cast of person; tall, and Roman also in the style of her face. In fact, the brother and the sister would have offered a fine impersonation of Coriolanus and Valeria. This Roman bias of the features a little affected the feminine loveliness of the daughter's appearance. But still, as the impression was not very decided, she would have been pronounced anywhere a very captivating young woman. These were the two crowns of Mr. K——'s felicity—that for seventeen or eighteen years made the very glory of his life. But Nemesis was on his steps; and one of these very children she framed the scourge which made the day of his death a happy deliverance, for which he had long hungered and thirsted. But I anticipate. About the time when I came to reside in Grasmere, some little affair of local business one night drew Wordsworth up to Mr. K——'s house. It was called—and with great propriety, from the multitude of holly trees that still survived from ancient days, *The Hollens*; which pretty local name Mrs. K——, in her general spirit of vulgar sentimentality, had changed to *Holly Grove*. The place, spite of its slipshod novelish name, which might have led one to expect a corresponding style of tinsel finery, and a display of childish purposes, about its furniture or its arrangements, was really simple and unpretending; whilst its situation was, in itself, a sufficient ground of interest; for it stood on a little terrace, running like an artificial gallery or corridor, along the final, and all but perpendicular, descent of the mighty Fairfield.¹ It seemed

¹ 'Mighty Fairfield':

'And Mighty Fairfield, with her chime

Of echoes, still was keeping time.'—WORDSWORTH'S 'Waggoner.'

I have retained the English name of Fairfield; but, when I was studying

as if it must require iron bolts to pin it to the rock, which rose so high and, apparently, so close behind. Not until you reached the little esplanade upon which the modest mansion stood, were you aware of a little area interposed between the rear of the house and the rock, just sufficient for ordinary domestic offices. The house was otherwise interesting to myself, from recalling one in which I had passed part of my infancy. As in that, you entered by a rustic hall, fitted up so as to make a beautiful little breakfasting-room: the distribution of the passages was pretty nearly the same; and there were other resemblances. Mr. K—— received us with civility and hospitality—checked, however, and embarrassed, by a very evident reserve. The reason of this was, partly, that he distrusted the feelings towards himself, of two scholars; but more, perhaps, that he had something beyond this general jealousy for distrusting Wordsworth. He had been a very extensive planter of larches, which were then recently introduced into the Lake country; and were, in every direction, displacing the native forest scenery, and dismally disfiguring this most lovely region; and this effect was necessarily in its worst excess during the infancy of the larch plantations; both because they took the formal arrangement of nursery grounds, until extensive thinnings, as well as storms, had begun to break this hideous stiffness in the lines and angles, and also because the larch is a mean tree, both in form and colouring, (having a bright gosling glare in spring, a wet blanket hue in autumn,) as long as it continues a young tree. Not until it has seen forty or fifty winters does it begin to toss its boughs about with a wild Alpine grace. Wordsworth, for many years, had systematically abused the larches and the larch planters; and there went about the country a pleasant anecdote, in connection with this well-known habit of his, which I have often heard repeated by the woodmen—viz. that, one day, when he believed himself to be quite alone—but was, in fact, surveyed coolly, during the whole process of his passions, by a reposing band of labourers in the

Danish, I stumbled upon the true meaning of the name, unlocked by that language; and reciprocally (as one amongst other instances which I met at the very threshold of my studies) unlocking the fact that Danish (or Icelandic rather) is the master-key to the local names and dialect of Westmoreland. *Faar* is a sheep: *fald* a hill. But are not all the hills sheep hills? No; Fairfield only, amongst all its neighbours, has large, smooth, pastoral savannahs, to which the sheep resort when all the rocky or barren neighbours are left desolate. [Q.]

shade, and at their noontide meal—Wordsworth, on finding a whole cluster of birch-trees grubbed up, and preparations making for the installation of larches in their place, was seen advancing to the spot with gathering wrath in his eyes; next he was heard pouring out an interrupted litany of comminations and maledictions; and, finally, as his eye rested upon the four or five larches which were already beginning to ‘dress the line’ of the new battalion, he seized his own hat in a transport of fury, and launched it against the odious intruders. Mr. K—— had, doubtless, heard of Wordsworth’s frankness upon this theme, and knew himself to be, as respected Grasmere, the sole offender. In another way, also, he had earned a few random shots from Wordsworth’s wrath—viz. as the erector of a huge unsightly barn, built solely for convenience, and so far violating all the modesty of rustic proportions, that it was really an eyesore in the valley. These considerations, and others besides, made him reserved; but he felt the silent appeal to his *lares* from the strangers’ presence, and was even kind in his courtesies. Suddenly, Mrs. K—— entered the room—instantly his smile died away; he did not even mention her name. Wordsworth, however, she knew slightly; and to me she introduced herself. Mr. K—— seemed almost impatient when I rose and presented her with my chair. Anything that detained her in the room for a needless moment seemed to him a nuisance. She, on the other hand—what was *her* behaviour? I had been told that she worshipped the very ground on which he trod; and so, indeed, it appeared. This adoring love might, under other circumstances, have been beautiful to contemplate; but here it impressed unmixed disgust. Imagine a woman of very homely features, and farther disfigured by a scorbutic eruption, fixing a tender gaze upon a burly man of forty, who shewed, by every word, look, gesture, movement, that he disdained her. In fact, nothing could be more injudicious than her deportment towards him. Everybody must feel that a man who hates any person, hates that person the more for troubling him with expressions of love; or, at least, it adds to hatred the sting of disgust. That was the fixed language of Mr. K——’s manner, in relation to his wife. He was not a man to be pleased with foolish fondling endearments, from any woman, before strangers; but from her! Faugh! he said internally, at every instant. His very eyes he averted from her: not once did he look at her, though forced into the odious necessity of

speaking to her several times; and, at length, when she seemed disposed to construe our presence as a sort of brief privilege to her own, he adopted that same artifice for ridding himself of her detested company which has sometimes done seasonable service to a fine gentleman when called upon by ladies for the explanation of a Greek word—he hinted to her, pretty broadly, that the subject of our conversation was not altogether proper for female ears; very much to the astonishment of Wordsworth and myself.

SOCIETY OF THE LAKES

IV

[PROFESSOR WILSON: DEATH OF LITTLE KATE WORDSWORTH] *

It was at Mr. Wordsworth's house that I first became acquainted with Professor (then Mr.) Wilson of Elleray. I have elsewhere described the impression which he made upon me at my first acquaintance; and it is sufficiently known, from other accounts of Mr. Wilson, (as, for example, that written by Mr. Lockhart in 'Peter's Letters,') that he divided his time and the utmost sincerity of his love between literature and the stormiest pleasures of real life. Cock-fighting, wrestling, pugilistic contests, boat-racing, horse-racing, all enjoyed Mr. Wilson's patronage; all were occasionally honoured by his personal participation. I mention this is no unfriendly spirit toward Professor Wilson; on the contrary, these propensities grew out of his ardent temperament and his constitutional endowments—his strength, speed, and agility: and, being confined to the period of youth—for I am speaking of a period removed by five-and-twenty years—can do him no dishonour amongst the candid and the judicious. '*Non lusisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum.*' The truth was, that Professor Wilson had in him, at that period of life, something of the old English chivalric feeling which our old ballad poetry agrees in ascribing to Robin Hood. Several men of genius have expressed to me, at different times, the delight they had in the traditional character of Robin Hood: he has no resemblance to the old heroes of Continental romance in one important feature; they are uniformly victorious; and this gives even a tone of monotony to the Continental poems: for, let them involve their hero in what dangers they may, the reader still feels them to be as illusory as those

* From *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* for August 1840.

which menace an enchanter—an Astolpho, for instance, who, by one blast of his horn, can dissipate an army of opponents. But Robin is frequently beaten: he never declines a challenge; sometimes he courts one; and occasionally he learns a lesson from some proud tinker or masterful beggar, the moral of which teaches him that there are better men in the world than himself. What follows? Is the brave man angry with his stout-hearted antagonist because he is no less brave and a little stronger than himself? Not at all: he insists on making him a present, on giving him a *déjeuner à la fourchette*, and (in case he is disposed to take service in the forest) finally adopts him into his band of archers. Much the same spirit governed, in his earlier years, Professor Wilson. And, though a man of prudence cannot altogether approve of his throwing himself into the convivial society of gipsies, tinkers, potters,¹ strolling players, etc., nevertheless, it tells altogether in favour of Professor Wilson's generosity of mind, that he was ever ready to forgo his advantages of station and birth, and to throw himself fearlessly upon his own native powers, as man opposed to man. Even at Oxford he fought an aspiring shoemaker repeatedly, which is creditable to both sides: for the very *prestige* of the gown is already overpowering to the artisan from the beginning, and he is half beaten by terror at his own presumption. Elsewhere he sought out, or, at least, did not avoid the most dreaded of the local heroes; and fought his way through his 'most verdant years,' taking or giving defiances to the right and the left in perfect carelessness, as chance or occasion offered. No man could well shew more generosity in these struggles, nor more magnanimity in reporting their issue, which naturally went many times against him. But Mr. Wilson neither sought to disguise the issue nor shewed himself at all displeased with it: even brutal ill-usage did not seem to have left any vindictive remembrance of itself. These features of his character, however, and these propensities which naturally belonged merely to the transitional state from boyhood to manhood, would have drawn little attention on their own account, had they not been relieved and emphatically contrasted by his passion for literature, and the fluent command which he soon shewed over a rich and

¹ *Potter* is the local term in northern England for a hawker of earthen ware, many of which class lead a vagrant life, and encamp during the summer months like gipsies. [Q.]

voluptuous poetic diction. In everything Mr. Wilson shewed himself an Athenian. Athenians were all lovers of the cockpit; and, howsoever shocking to the sensibilities of modern refinement, we have no doubt that Plato was a frequent better at cock-fights; and Socrates is known to have bred cocks himself. If there were any Athenian, however, in particular, it was Alcibiades; for he had his marvellous versatility; and to the Windermere neighbourhood in which he had settled, this versatility came recommended by something of the very same position in society—the same wealth, the same social temper, the same jovial hospitality. No person was better fitted to win or to maintain a high place in social esteem; for he could adapt himself to all companies; and the wish to conciliate and to win his way by flattering the self-love of others, was so predominant over all personal self-love and vanity,

‘That *he* did in the general bosom reign
Of young and old.’

Mr. Wilson and most of his family I had already known for six years. We had projected journeys together through Spain and Greece, all of which had been nipped in the bud by Napoleon’s furious and barbarous mode of making war. It was no joke, as it had been in past times, for an Englishman to be found wandering in continental regions; the pretence that he was, or might be, a spy—a charge so easy to make, so impossible to throw off—at once sufficed for the hanging of the unhappy traveller. In one of his Spanish bulletins, Napoleon even boasted ¹ of having hanged sixteen Englishmen, ‘merchants or others of that nation,’ whom he taxed with no suspicion even of being suspected, beyond the simple fact of being detected in the act of breathing Spanish air. These atrocities had interrupted our continental schemes; and we were thus led the more to roam amongst home scenes. How it happened I know not—for we had wandered together often in England—but, some some accident, it was not until 1814 that we visited Edinburgh together. Then it was that I first saw Scotland.

I remember a singular incident which befell us on the road. Breakfasting together, before starting, at Mr. Wilson’s place of

¹ This brutal boast might, after all, be a falsehood; and, with respect to mere numbers, probably was so. [Q.]

Elleray, we had roamed, through a long and delightful day, by way of Ulleswater, etc. Reaching Penrith at night, we slept there; and, in the morning, as we were sunning ourselves in the street, we saw, seated in an arm-chair, and dedicating himself to the self-same task of *apricating* his jolly personage, a rosy, jovial, portly man, having something of the air of a Quaker. Good nature was clearly his predominating quality; and, as that happened to be our foible also, we soon fell into talk; and from that into reciprocations of good will; and from those into a direct proposal, on our new friend's part, that we should set out upon our travels together. How—whither—to what end or object—seemed as little to enter into his speculations as the cost of realizing them. Rare it is, in this business world of ours, to find any man in so absolute a state of indifference and neutrality, that for him all quarters of the globe, and all points of the compass, are self-balanced by philosophic equilibrium of choice. There seemed to us something amusing and yet monstrous in such a man; and, perhaps, had we been in the same condition of exquisite indeterminateness, to this hour we might all have been staying together at Penrith. We, however, were previously bound to Edinburgh; and, as soon as this was explained to him, that way he proposed to accompany us. We took a chaise, therefore, jointly, to Carlisle; and, during the whole eighteen miles, he astonished us by the wildest and most frantic displays of erudition, much of it levelled at Sir Isaac Newton. Much philosophical learning also he exhibited; but the grotesque accompaniment of the whole was, that, after every bravura, he fell back into his corner in fits of laughter at himself. We began to find out the unhappy solution of his indifference and purposeless condition: he was a lunatic; and, afterwards, we had reason to suppose that he was now a fugitive from his keepers. At Carlisle he became restless and suspicious; and, finally, upon some real or imaginary business, he turned aside to Whitehaven. We were not the objects of his jealousy; for he parted with us reluctantly and anxiously. On our part, we felt our pleasure overcast by sadness; for we had been much amused by his conversation, and could not but respect the philological learning which he had displayed. But one thing was whimsical enough: Wilson purposely said some startling things—startling in point of decorum, or gay pleasantries, *contra bonos mores*; at every sally of which, he looked as awfully shocked as though he himself had not

been holding the most licentious talk in another key, licentious as respected all truth of history or of science. Another illustration, in fact, he furnished of what I have so often heard Coleridge say—that lunatics, in general, so far from being the brilliant persons they are thought, and having a preternatural brightness of fancy, usually are the very dullest and most uninspired of mortals. The sequel of our poor friend's history—for the apparent goodness of his nature had interested us both in his fortunes and caused us to inquire after him through all probable channels—was, that he was last seen by a Cambridge man of our acquaintance, but under circumstances which confirmed our worst fears: it was in a stage-coach; and, at first, the Cantab suspected nothing amiss; but, some accident of conversation having started, the topic of La Place's *Mécanique Céleste*, off flew our jolly Penrith friend in a tirade against Sir Isaac Newton; so that at once we recognized him, as the 'Vicar of Wakefield' his 'cosmogony friend' in prison; but—and that was melancholy to hear—this tirade was suddenly checked, in the rudest manner, by a brutal fellow in one corner of the carriage, who, as it now appeared, was attending him as a regular keeper; and, according to the custom of such people, always laid an interdict upon every ebullition of fancy or animated thought. He was a man whose mind had got some wheel entangled, or some spring overloaded, but else, was a learned and able person; and he was to be silent at the bidding of a low, brutal fellow, incapable of distinguishing between the gaities of fancy and the wandering of the intellect. Sad fate! and sad inversion of the natural relations between the accomplished scholar and the rude illiterate boor!

Of Edinburgh I thought to have spoken at length. But I pause, and retreat from the subject, when I remember that so many of those whom I loved and honoured at that time—some, too, among the gayest of the gay—are now lying in their graves. Of Professor Wilson's sisters, the youngest, at that time a child almost, and standing at the very vestibule of womanhood, is alone living: she has had a romantic life; has twice traversed, with no attendants but her servants, the gloomy regions of the Caucasus; and once with a young child by her side. Her husband, Mr. M'Neill, is now the English Envoy at the court of Teheran. On the rest, one of whom I honoured and loved as a sister, the curtain has fallen; and here, in the present mood of my spirits, I

also feel disposed to drop a curtain over my subsequent memoirs. Farewell, hallowed recollections!

Thus, I have sketched the condition of the lake district, as to society of an intellectual order, at the time (viz. the winter of 1808-9,) when I became a personal resident in that district; and, indeed, from this era, through a period of about twenty years in succession, I may describe my domicile as being amongst the lakes and mountains of Westmoreland. It is true, I often made excursions to London, Bath, and its neighbourhood, or northwards to Edinburgh; and, perhaps, on an average, passed one-fourth part of each year at a distance from this district; but here only it was that henceforwards I had a house and small establishment. The house, for a very long course of years, was that same cottage in Grasmere, embowered in roses and jessamine, which I have already described as a spot hallowed to the admirers of Mr. Wordsworth, by his seven years' occupation of its pretty chambers and its rocky orchard: a little domain, which he has himself apostrophized as the 'lowest stair in that magnificent temple,' forming the north-eastern boundary of Grasmere. The little orchard is rightly called 'the lowest stair'; for, within itself, all is ascending ground; hardly enough of flat area on which to pitch a pavilion, and even that scanty surface an inclined plane; whilst the rest of the valley, into which you step immediately from the garden gate, is, (according to the characteristic beauty of the northern English valleys, as first noticed by Mr. Wordsworth himself,) 'flat as the floor of a temple.'

In sketching the state of the literary society gathered or gathering about the English lakes, at the time of my settling amongst them, I have, of course, authorized the reader to suppose that I personally mixed freely amongst the whole; else I should have had neither the means for describing that society with truth, nor any motive for attempting it. Meantime, the direct object of my own residence at the lakes was the society of Mr. Wordsworth. And it will be a natural inference that, if I mingled on familiar or friendly terms with this society, *a fortiori* would Mr. Wordsworth do so, as belonging to the lake district by birth, and as having been, in some instances, my own introducer to members of this community. But it was not so: and never was a grosser blunder committed than by Lord Byron, when, in a letter to Mr. Hogg,

(from which an extract is given in some volume of Mr. Lockhart's 'Life of Sir Walter Scott,') * he speaks of Wordsworth, Southey, etc., in connection with Sir Walter, as all alike injured by mixing only with little adoring coteries, which each severally was supposed to have gathered about himself as a centre. Now, had this really been the case, I know not how the objects of such a partial or exclusive admiration could have been injured by it in any sense with which the public were concerned. A writer may—and of that there are many instances—write the worse for meeting nobody of sympathy with himself; no admiration sufficient to convince him that he has written powerfully: that misfortune, when it occurs, may injure a writer, or may cause him to cease cultivating his genius. But no man was ever injured by the strong reflection of his own power in love and admiration; not as a writer, I mean: though it is very true, from the great variety of modes in which praise, or the indirect flattery of silent homage, acts upon different minds, that some men may be injured as social companions: vanity, and, still more, egotism—the habit of making self the central point of reference, in every treatment of every subject—may certainly be cherished by the idolatry of a private circle, continually ascending; but arrogance and gloomy antisocial pride are qualities much more likely to be favoured by sympathy withheld, and the unjust denial of a man's pretensions. This, however, need not be discussed with any reference to Mr. Wordsworth; for he had no such admiring circle: no applauding coterie ever gathered about him. Wordsworth was not a man to be openly flattered: his pride repelled that kind of homage, or any homage that offered itself with the air of conferring honour; and repelled it in a tone of loftiness or arrogance that never failed to kindle the pride of the baffled flatterer. Nothing, in the way of applause, could give Wordsworth any pleasure, unless it were the spontaneous and half-unconscious utterance of delight in some passage—the implicit applause of love, half afraid to express itself; or else the deliberate praise of rational examination, study, and comparison, applied to his writings: these were the only modes of admiration which could recommend themselves to Wordsworth. But, had it been otherwise, there was another mistake in what Lord Byron said:—The neighbouring people, in

* Masson notes that Byron's letter was not to Hogg, but to Moore concerning a letter received from Hogg, and is dated 3rd August 1814.

every degree, 'gentle and simple,' literary or half-educated, who had heard of Wordsworth, agreed in despising him. Never had poet or prophet less honour in his own country. Of the gentry, very few knew anything about Wordsworth. Grasmere was a vale little visited at that time, except for an hour's admiration. The case is now altered; and partly by a new road, which, having pierced the valley by a line carried along the water's edge, at a most preposterous cost, and with a large arrear of debt for the next generation, saves the labour of surmounting a laborious hill. The case is now altered, no less for the intellect of the age; and Rydal Mount is now one of the most honoured abodes in the island. But, at that time, Grasmere did not differ more from the Grasmere of to-day than Wordsworth from the Wordsworth of 1809-20. I repeat that he was little known, even as a resident in the country; and, as a poet, strange it would have been had the little town of Ambleside undertaken to judge for itself, and against a tribunal which had for a time subdued the very temper of the age. Lord Byron might have been sure that nowhere would the contempt for Mr. Wordsworth be riper than exactly amongst those who had a local reason for curiosity about the man, and who, of course, adopting the tone of the presiding journals, adopted them with a personality of feeling unknown elsewhere.

Except, therefore, with the Lloyds, or occasionally with Thomas Wilkinson the Quaker, or very rarely with Southey, Wordsworth had no intercourse at all beyond the limits of Grasmere: and in that valley I was myself, for some years, his sole visiting friend; as, on the other hand, my sole visitors, as regarded that vale, were himself and his family.

Among that family, and standing fourth in the series of his children, was a little girl, whose life, short as it was, and whose death, obscure and little heard of as it was amongst all the rest of the world, connected themselves with the records of my own life by ties of passion so profound, by a grief so frantic, and so memorable through the injurious effects which it produced of a physical kind, that, had I left untouched every other chapter of my own experience, I should certainly have left behind some memorandum of this, as having a permanent interest in the psychological history of human nature. Luckily the facts are not without a parallel, and in well authenticated medical books; else I should have scrupled (as what man does *not* scruple who values,

above all things, the reputation for veracity?) to throw the whole stress of credibility on my own unattached narration. But all experienced physicians know well that cases similar to mine, though not common, occur at intervals in every large community.

When I first settled in Grasmere, Catherine Wordsworth was in her infancy; but, even at that age, noticed me more than any other person excepting, of course, her mother. She had for an attendant a young girl, perhaps thirteen years old—Sarah, one of the orphan children left by the unfortunate couple, George and Sarah Green, whose tragical end in a snow-storm I have already narrated. This Sarah Green was as far removed in character as could be imagined from that elder sister who had won so much admiration in her childish days, by her premature display of energy and household virtues. She was lazy, luxurious, and sensual: one, in fact, of those nurses who, in their anxiety to gossip about young men, leave their infant or youthful charges to the protection of chance. It was, however, not in her out-of-door ramblings, but at home, that the accident occurred which determined the fortunes of little Catherine. Mr. Coleridge was, at that time, a visiter to the Wordsworths at Allan Bank, that house in Grasmere to which Wordsworth had removed upon quitting his cottage. One day about noon, when, perhaps, he was coming down to breakfast, Mr. Coleridge passed Sarah Green, playing after her indolent fashion with the child; and between them lay a number of carrots. He warned the girl that raw carrots were an indigestible substance for the stomach of an infant. This warning was neglected: little Catherine ate—it was never known how many; and, in a short time, was seized with strong convulsions. I saw her in this state about two, P.M. No medical aid was to be had nearer than Ambleside; about six miles distant. However, all proper measures were taken; and, by sunset, she had so far recovered as to be pronounced out of danger. Her left side, however, left arm, and left leg, from that time forward, were in a disabled state: not what could be called paralyzed, but suffering a sort of atony or imperfect distribution of vital power. Catherine was not above three years old when she died; so that there could not have been much room for the expansion of her understanding, or the unfolding of her real character. But there was room enough in her short life, and too much, for love the most frantic to settle upon her. The whole vale of Grasmere is not large enough to

allow of any great distances between house and house; and as it happened that little Kate Wordsworth returned my love, she in a manner lived with me at my solitary cottage; as often as I could entice her from home, walked with me, slept with me, and was my sole companion. That I was not singular in ascribing some witchery to the nature and manners of this innocent child, you may gather from the following most beautiful lines extracted from a sketch¹ towards her portraiture, drawn by her father, (with whom, however, she was noways a favourite):

‘And, as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,
Not less if unattended and alone
Than when both young and old sit gather’d round
And take delight in its activity;
Even so this happy creature of herself
Was all sufficient: Solitude to her
Was blithe society, who fill’d the air
With gladness and involuntary songs;
Light were her sallies as the tripping fawn’s,
Forth startled from the form where she lay couch’d;
Unthought of, unexpected, as the stir
Of the soft breeze, ruffling the meadow-flowers;
Or from before it chasing wantonly
The many colour’d images impress’d
Upon the bosom of a placid lake.’

It was this radiant spirit of joyousness, making solitude for her blithe society, and filling from morning to night the air ‘with gladness and involuntary songs,’ this it was which so fascinated my heart, that I became blindly, doatingly, in a servile degree,

¹ It is entitled, ‘Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old;’ and is dated at the foot 1811, which must be an oversight, for she was not so old until the following year. I may as well add the first six lines, though I had a reason for beginning the extract where it does, in order to fix the attention upon the special circumstance which had so much fascinated myself, of her all-sufficiency to herself, and the way in which she ‘filled the air with gladness and involuntary songs.’ The other lines are these:

‘Loving she is and tractable, though wild;
And Innocence hath privilege in her
To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes;
And feats of cunning; and the pretty round
Of trespasses, affected to provoke
Mock chastisement and partnership in play.’
[O.]

above all things, the reputation for veracity?) to throw the whole stress of credibility on my own unattached narration. But all experienced physicians know well that cases similar to mine, though not common, occur at intervals in every large community.

When I first settled in Grasmere, Catherine Wordsworth was in her infancy; but, even at that age, noticed me more than any other person excepting, of course, her mother. She had for an attendant a young girl, perhaps thirteen years old—Sarah, one of the orphan children left by the unfortunate couple, George and Sarah Green, whose tragical end in a snow-storm I have already narrated. This Sarah Green was as far removed in character as could be imagined from that elder sister who had won so much admiration in her childish days, by her premature display of energy and household virtues. She was lazy, luxurious, and sensual: one, in fact, of those nurses who, in their anxiety to gossip about young men, leave their infant or youthful charges to the protection of chance. It was, however, not in her out-of-door ramblings, but at home, that the accident occurred which determined the fortunes of little Catherine. Mr. Coleridge was, at that time, a visiter to the Wordsworths at Allan Bank, that house in Grasmere to which Wordsworth had removed upon quitting his cottage. One day about noon, when, perhaps, he was coming down to breakfast, Mr. Coleridge passed Sarah Green, playing after her indolent fashion with the child; and between them lay a number of carrots. He warned the girl that raw carrots were an indigestible substance for the stomach of an infant. This warning was neglected: little Catherine ate—it was never known how many; and, in a short time, was seized with strong convulsions. I saw her in this state about two, P.M. No medical aid was to be had nearer than Ambleside; about six miles distant. However, all proper measures were taken; and, by sunset, she had so far recovered as to be pronounced out of danger. Her left side, however, left arm, and left leg, from that time forward, were in a disabled state: not what could be called paralyzed, but suffering a sort of atony or imperfect distribution of vital power. Catherine was not above three years old when she died; so that there could not have been much room for the expansion of her understanding, or the unfolding of her real character. But there was room enough in her short life, and too much, for love the most frantic to settle upon her. The whole vale of Grasmere is not large enough to

distance of a quarter of a mile, generally not so much. Always almost she carried a basket on her head; and usually the first hint upon which the figure arose commenced in wild plants, such as tall ferns, or the purple flowers of the foxglove; but, whatever might be the colours or the forms, uniformly the same little full-formed figure arose, uniformly dressed in the little blue bed-gown and black skirt of Westmoreland and uniformly with the air of advancing motion. Through part of June, July, and part of August, in fact throughout the summer, this frenzy of grief continued.* It was reasonably to be expected that Nature would avenge such senseless self-surrender to passion; for, in fact, so far from making an effort to resist it, I clung to it as a luxury, (which, in the midst of suffering, it really was in part.) All at once, on a day at the latter end of August, in one instant of time, I was seized with some nervous sensation that, for a moment, caused sickness. A glass of brandy removed the sickness; but I felt, to my horror, a sting, as it were, of some stationary torment left behind—a torment absolutely indescribable, but under which I felt assured that life could not be borne. It is useless and impossible to describe what followed: with no apparent illness discoverable to any medical eye—looking, indeed, better than usual for three months and upwards, I was under the possession of some internal nervous malady, that made each respiration which I drew an act of separate anguish. I travelled southwards immediately to Liverpool, to Birmingham, to Bristol, to Bath, for medical advice; and finally rested—in a gloomy state of despair, rather because I saw no use in further change, than that I looked for any change in this place more than others—at Clifton, near Bristol. Here it was, at length, in the course of November, that, in one hour, my malady began to leave me: it was not quite so abrupt, however, in its departure, as in its first development: a peculiar sensation arose from the knee downwards, about midnight: it went forwards through a space of about five hours, and then stopped, leaving me perfectly free from every trace of the awful malady which had possessed me; but so much debilitated as with

* De Quincey wrote Dorothy Wordsworth on 21st June 1812: 'Oh that I could have died for her or with her! Willingly dear friend I would have done this. I do not say it from any momentary burst of grief, but as a feeling that I have ejaculated in truth and sincerity a thousand times since I heard of her death' (Dove Cottage Collection. I wish to thank the Trustees of Dove Cottage for permission to quote from letters in their collection).

difficulty to stand or walk. Going down, soon after this, to Ilfracombe, in Devonshire, where there were hot sea baths, I found it easy enough to restore my shattered strength. But the remarkable fact in this catastrophe of my illness is, that all grief for little Kate Wordsworth, nay, all remembrance of her, had, with my malady, vanished from my mind. The traces of her innocent features were utterly washed away from my heart: she might have been dead for a thousand years, so entirely abolished was the last lingering image of her face or figure. The little memorials of her which her mother had given to me, as, in particular, a pair of her red morocco shoes, won not a sigh from me as I looked at them: even her little grassy grave, white with snow, when I returned to Grasmere in January, 1813, was looked at almost with indifference; except, indeed, as now become a memorial to me of that dire internal physical convulsion thence arising, by which I had been shaken and wrenched; and, in short, a case more entirely realizing the old Pagan superstition of a nympholepsy in the first place, and, secondly, of a Lethe or river of oblivion, and the possibility, by one draught from this potent stream, of applying an everlasting ablution to all the soils and stains of human anguish, I do not suppose the psychological history of man affords.

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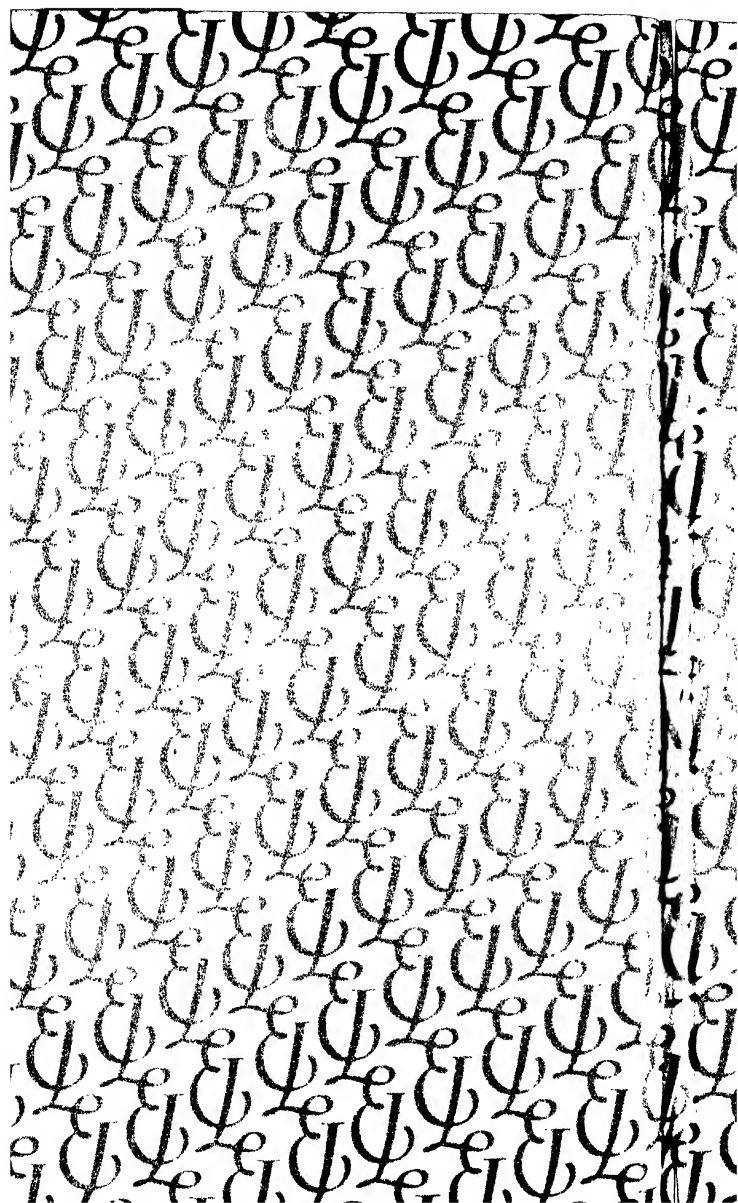
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